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THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN RALEIGH DINES OUT.

LOVE, we are often told, is only an episode in the life of a man, although it is a woman's whole existence, and, no doubt, there is some truth in the saying. While the episode lasts, however, it generally fills up quite as much of the man's thoughts, especially if he be an idle man, as it does of a woman's, and the image of Vera filled up so much of Captain Raleigh's mind as to leave very little margin for any other thoughts. He took a languid interest in politics and the news of the day, and a civil interest in the conversation of his mother and the few people he came in contact with in his own home, but the one absorbing interest of his life was Vera. He thought of her by day, and he dreamt of her by night; and the months of his holiday, instead of passing all too quickly, dragged wearily on; each month achieving one good purpose, since it brought Vera's twenty-first birthday a month nearer.

When Captain Raleigh came down to breakfast a day or two after Mr. Ryot Tempest's second marriage: of whose engagement even he had not heard: his furlough was nearly over. Six more weeks and he would be on his way to India again, there to remain till the following March, when he would return to England in time for Vera's twenty-first birthday. He hoped to be able to effect an exchange, which would enable him to come home. If he failed to do so, he meant to retire, since no professional hopes should prevent him from redeeming his promise to Vera on her coming of age.

As the time for leaving England drew near, a great longing to see her once more before he sailed took possession of him, and he came down to breakfast one morning resolved to write that very day and ask Mr. Ryot Tempest's permission for a final interview.

He was down a few minutes before his mother, and, having read his letters, one of which contained an invitation, which he half-decided

to accept, to spend a week with some friends at Plymouth, he opened the *Times*, and the first thing which caught his eye was the following announcement of Mr. Ryot Tempest's marriage :

"Ryot Tempest—Jamieson.—On the 18th inst., at Ashchurch, by the Lord Bishop of the diocese, cousin of the bride, the Rev. Edward Ryot Tempest, Rector of Woodford, to Marion (Poppie), widow of the late E. Jamieson, Esq., of the Grange, Ashchurch."

Captain Raleigh flung down the paper, and strode angrily across the room to the window, his sleepy eyes blazing with anger, his pale face paler than ever with suppressed rage, as he gnawed fiercely his under lip to keep in the words he had in his heart to utter against the woman who, having spoilt his youth for him, would, he knew, do her utmost to ruin his happiness for life. The temptation to curse her was both fierce and sudden, but he was skilled in the art of self-control, and the storm of passionate anger which swept over his soul was powerless to injure it. He remained by the window seeing nothing but the advertisement he had just read till he heard his mother's step in the dining-room, and, as he turned to greet her, there was no sign of the storm he had just been weathering ; he was, if anything, more languid than usual. He picked up the newspaper and, handing it to his mother, pointed to the marriage notice without saying a word.

Mrs. Raleigh was a little delicate woman ; a gentlewoman in every sense ; refined, with a manner that was eminently gracious in the fullest meaning of the word ; who, fragile as she looked, had, nevertheless, borne many sorrows in the course of her life with patience and resignation.

"My dear Arthur, how terribly soon after his wife's death ! And what a contrast, from all you tell me, to Vera's mother—she a devout, saintly woman, and this one a dashing, handsome, worldly widow—a poppy, indeed—showy, handsome, but intoxicating and noxious ; all very well to admire at a distance, but very dangerous to transplant into your house, to say nothing of your heart. Poor man ! I fear he will live to repent it."

"Possibly ; but my sympathies have not reached him yet, they are all with Vera. It will make her life miserable. And I am sure of this : Mrs. Jamieson—I beg her pardon, Mrs. Ryot Tempest—will not leave a stone unturned to make mischief between us. Mother, can I warn Vera, do you think ? The circumstances have changed entirely since I promised to hold no correspondence with her, but I suppose that does not absolve me from my promise, does it ?"

"I think not. But didn't you tell me that Vera has a nurse to whom she is much attached ? Why not warn her ? She will take care to tell Vera, no doubt ; and if you send no letter or message, I don't think it would be any breach of honour. You can make the nurse promise not to say where her information came from if you like."

"I will. This nurse is sister to the village blacksmith at Woodford. I'll get her address from him, and go and see her. I have had an invitation to Plymouth this morning. I think I will accept it. I can visit this Norah on my way back."

Mrs. Raleigh inwardly grudged every day her son spent away from her, but she saw this news had upset him, for he ate no breakfast. So, like the self-effacing woman she was, she encouraged him to go to his Plymouth friends, and entered, with loving interest, into his arrangements for his visit.

Captain Raleigh never cared for society, and just now he was less inclined than ever to cultivate its charms. So, when on arriving at Plymouth, he was informed there was a dinner-party in the house that night, he inwardly wished he could conscientiously plead sudden illness to excuse himself from dining. Not even the information imparted to him by his hostess that she had allotted to him an exceedingly pretty girl, reconciled him to his lot.

He entered the drawing-room with his most languid air, just as dinner was announced; and judging from his appearance there was every prospect that the pretty girl told off to him would find him exceedingly uninteresting.

"Just in the nick of time, Raleigh; let me introduce you to Miss Ryot Tempest," said the host hurrying through the introduction with the lady he was about to take into dinner on his arm.

In the general move which was taking place, few people observed the sudden change in the faces and manners of Captain Raleigh and the lovely but sad-looking girl in mourning to whom he was presented. Those who were near enough to see must have guessed they were more than mere casual acquaintances who had thus unexpectedly met; for the girl's pale face was covered with a blush of delight and her lovely eyes flashed with joy; while if an angel from heaven had been suddenly introduced to Captain Raleigh the angelic presence would have failed to elicit such a look of supreme happiness as spread over his handsome face as Vera, for it was she, laid her little hand in his.

"Vera!" he murmured under his breath as he drew the little hand through his arm, and the two mechanically followed in the wake of the others. "How came you here?" he asked, bending down to slake his thirsty eyes at the wellspring of his earthly happiness.

"It is all that dear, kind Uncle George's doing; I am sure it is. I am staying with him, you know, and papa has told him all about us. I did not want to come here to-night at all, but he insisted upon it, and pretended it was only because he considered I had been shut up long enough," said Vera.

"But how did he know I should be here?"

"Oh! he is very intimate with our host; I expect the two have planned it between them."

"And made us their debtors for life," said Captain Raleigh with an affectionate glance at his host.

The dinner and wine were both excellent, but they were utterly wasted upon this couple, neither of whom knew or cared what they were eating and drinking. The meal lasted over two hours, but it seemed to them no sooner were they seated than the signal for the ladies to rise was given. During that all too short two hours not even the shadow of the new Mrs. Ryot Tempest had dimmed the radiance of their joy; they had been too much absorbed in each other to permit the thought of any third person. His own future plans Captain Raleigh found time to communicate, and he learnt that Vera was to remain at Plymouth for the next three weeks, when she would return to Woodford. And by the time this information was imparted, the ladies rose.

As soon as the rustle and bustle their retreat caused had subsided, Vera's uncle, a retired naval officer, moved across the room and took her vacant chair by Captain Raleigh's side.

Captain Tempest was no bigger than his brother, but he was very unlike him in every other way. He was handsome, with a pink and white complexion, eyes something like Vera's, and clean-cut features. His manner to ladies was as perfect as that of naval officers usually is; to men it was courteous and easy, with not a trace of Mr. Ryot Tempest's nervousness; to Captain Raleigh it was as charming as Captain Tempest could make it.

"I have to thank you for the happiest evening of my life, sir," said Captain Raleigh after a few introductory remarks had been exchanged.

"Not at all, my dear fellow. I am only too glad to do you and my dear little niece, whom I love as my own daughter, a kindness. As for my brother, I have not common patience with him, but it is just like him; he always was the fool of the family; he has played the part well all his life and I suppose will continue to do so to the end of the chapter. He ran away with a French school-girl, which for a young parson was pretty foolish to begin with, seeing she was a Catholic. Then he has his children baptised by one of your priests to please her, and brings them up Protestants to please himself. So much for his youth. Now, when he might be supposed to have learnt wisdom, he objects to you as a son-in-law solely because your religion is the same as Vera's mother's. As I told him, I supposed what was sauce for the goose was not sauce for the gosling in this case. And now, to crown all his folly, before his wife has been dead a year he has gone and married that dashing, worldly, designing woman, Mrs. Jamieson, who'll lead him a fine dance if half I hear of her is true. And serve him right, too."

"I fear it will spoil Vera's home for the ten months she still has to live in it."

There was a pause, and then Captain Tempest said in an undertone:

"Why don't you marry her now from my house and take her out to India with you? I'll give the breakfast with pleasure."

Another sudden and sharp temptation for Captain Raleigh. There was nothing on earth he desired so much as to take Vera out with him as his wife, and what was to hinder him since her own uncle suggested it. She would lose no caste by being married from her uncle's house instead of from her father's; not a breath of scandal could attach to such a wedding; since Mr. Ryot Tempest was abroad with his bride, it would seem to outsiders a very sensible arrangement. Wasn't it a beneficent Providence who had watched over him and brought him to Plymouth in order to grant him his heart's desire? Why should he not put out his hand and grasp the apple?

Because it was an apple, after all; it was forbidden fruit. He could not break his word of honour to Mr. Ryot Tempest even to win Vera, and if he knew her she would despise him if he proposed to do such a thing.

"What do you say to my proposal?" asked the impetuous little Captain.

Captain Raleigh shook himself as if to shake off the devil who was tempting him to consent.

"I must say no. I gave Mr. Ryot Tempest my solemn promise I would neither attempt to see nor write to Vera till she was of age, and I cannot break it. Our meeting to-night was so purely accidental—indeed, as far as we were concerned, so unavoidable—that I cannot accuse myself of having broken my promise, but I shall leave Plymouth by the first train to-morrow."

"Quixotic, sir; but I honour you for it. I consider Edward's marriage to a great extent absolves you from that promise, but it is a matter for you to decide. I can only regret my inability to help you," said Captain Tempest warmly.

"There is a way you can help me. I may possibly not speak to Vera again this evening——"

"Oh, won't you! I'll see to that," thought Captain Tempest.

"I want her to know her step-mother will leave no stone unturned to separate us, even to the length of announcing my marriage to someone else. Will you warn her? She is aware that in my salad days I was engaged to Mrs. Jamieson, but her guileless nature will never suspect the length a jealous woman's spite can carry her."

"She shall be armed cap-à-pied. By the way, have you heard her brother has made a terrible *mésalliance*—married the blacksmith's daughter? Vera will tell you all about it. And now suppose we go into the drawing-room."

This news didn't appear to affect Captain Raleigh much; and when he reached the drawing-room he was sent to the piano to turn over Vera's music whilst she played and sang; and then he was asked to sing himself whilst she accompanied him; Captain Tempest and

their host and hostess taking care neither of them should leave the piano till Captain Tempest's carriage was announced.

"Raleigh, will you bring my niece down and wrap her up carefully, please?" cried that good-natured uncle as he led his wife down to the hall; and had he wished, Captain Raleigh could not have refused.

"Here are Vera's shawls; take her out of this draughty hall, Raleigh; she'll catch cold after singing," said Captain Tempest, pushing Vera and her lover into the dining-room when they got downstairs and shutting the door upon them. Then he experienced great difficulty in finding his own overcoat; and when found it was a minute or two before, with the help of a conscious footman, he got into it satisfactorily. Then he lost his gloves, and having turned out all his pockets, finally discovered he had them on; and then only would he pay any attention to all his wife's impatient hints, and, after much rattling of the handle of the dining-room door, put his head in and ask if Vera were ready.

Seven blissful minutes had been snatched from time by kind Captain Tempest, and scarcely seven sentences had been spoken by those lovers, and yet neither of them ever thought that they had wasted their opportunity.

"I leave to-morrow morning, my own love," whispered Raleigh as he wrapped a shawl round Vera's gleaming shoulders.

Vera's answer was to take his hands in hers and look into his face beseechingly as she whispered:

"Because of Rex's marriage?"

"What? Because of my promise. What has Rex to do with us?" said Raleigh, folding the slim figure to his breast.

And then they became too much absorbed in each other to heed the fleeting moments till Captain Tempest's rattle at the door disturbed them.

"Be true, my love; be true for ten more months," said he.

"For ever," whispered Vera as she tore herself from his embrace.

"Vera, my dear, the horses won't stand and your aunt is nervous," said Uncle George; and then Vera was put into the carriage, feeling profoundly indifferent as to what the horses did—they might run away or shy or stand on their hind legs if it pleased them.

If she could only sleep through the next ten months of her life! But nothing seemed further from her than sleep just then, unless it was happiness. Overpowered with grief and excitement at the scene she had just been through, she fell back in her corner of the carriage sobbing as if her heart would break, while Captain Tempest inwardly composed a letter to his brother containing a few home-truths, which was written and posted before he went to bed: for if it had the effect he desired of obtaining Mr. Ryot Tempest's consent to Vera's immediate marriage, there was no time to lose.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FUCHSIA-BELLS.

MRS. JAMIESON'S servants received permission from their mistress to give a party in honour of her marriage before leaving the Grange. A cheque was left with the butler to defray the expenses, and the day was fixed for the Monday following the wedding, in order that Mrs. Tanner might be present. This party had been talked of for weeks, and unknown to their mistress the servants had decided the entertainment should take the form of a fancy-ball, but this was kept a profound secret from the powers that were. Mr. Ryot Tempest's servants were naturally invited, and Mrs. Canter, who was well-known to Mrs. Tanner, had received an invitation; but balls were not in her line, so she sent a characteristic refusal, though, as it happened, she afterwards went. Mark Brown, the cook and Mary were of the party, and indeed the unanimous opinion was that the palm for ingenuity in the choice of a costume, and for "elegance" in embodying the poetical thought which the cook evolved from her inner consciousness, must be given to the Rectory-maids.

They went as Fuchsia-bells.

And this is how they clothed this flowery idea, which, as Mary said, was as witty as it was pretty; and so "innocent-like" too, for of course their partners would all spell bell with an e at the end.

They wore pale green satin bodices which were supposed to represent the calyx of the fuchsia, short pink tarletan skirts, festooned over purple satin petticoats to represent the carolla or bell, and yellow shoes and stockings to represent the stamens. The rough, red arms and shoulders of the cook were, in the opinion of that young woman, chastened and subdued by the delicate hue of the green satin bodice, and when the Fuchsia-bells were announced the room rang with their praises.

"So refined," said the butler, who, by way of displaying his modest opinion of himself, and choosing a part he was well able to support, was got up as the heir to the throne.

"So elegant," said the present Mrs. Ryot Tempest's maid, who was dressed as Twilight in one of her mistress's trousseau dresses which came home from the dressmaker's in the nick of time.

"So lady-like," said a footman, who never lived with any but county families, so was in a position to pronounce this judgment.

"So stylish," cried the village grocer, who, with a view to trade rather than to personal comfort or æsthetic effect, came as a sugar-loaf.

"Such bong-tong," said a lacquey, who had just returned from the Riviera, and so had forgotten his native tongue.

The company had hardly recovered from the entrance of the Fuchsia-bells, when Mark Brown appeared as a Bishop of the Established Church. Mary had dressed him in some of her master's clothes, having cut up one of his surplices for the lawn-sleeves, which her observation of the Bishop's costume on the wedding-day enabled her to copy fairly well.

His entrance crowned the triumph of the Fuchsia-bells, and the Grange servants confessed the Rectory servants quite deserved their respect and notice. Needless to say the conversation was almost entirely confined to discussing the affairs of their various masters and mistresses, especially those of Mr. Ryot Tempest, until an unexpected arrival soon after the ball opened turned the current of their thoughts into another channel.

About eight o'clock a violent clashing of the bell was heard in the pause between two dances, and immediately after Mrs. Canter, dressed in her best, stood on the threshold of the ball-room, her widow's mourning making a striking and lugubrious contrast to the gay costumes of the rest of the company. The butler, with one of the Fuchsia-bells on his arm, advanced to receive her, but instead of replying to his greetings, Mrs. Canter placed a hand on each of her ample hips and fairly shrieked with laughter.

The butler looked pompous, the Fuchsia-bell, Mr. Ryot Tempest's cook, blushed crimson, but Mrs. Canter laughed on remorselessly till the tears ran down her rosy cheeks; then she began to recover and gasped out: "Law! cook! well, there! upon my word!" and similar ejaculations between her peals of laughter.

"Better late than never; Mrs. Canter, come in, ma'am," said the butler, secretly condemning Mrs. Canter's conduct as very vulgar, while he expressed his sympathy with the Fuchsia-bell by squeezing her fat red arm against his side.

At last, after several ineffectual attempts to do so, Mrs. Canter managed to explain her sudden appearance in the following words.

"Bless you, I haven't come to the ball; I have come for Mr. Ryot Tempest's address, and I am going back as soon as I have got it. I came all the way from Liverpool for it."

"From Liverpool! We are expecting Mrs. Tanner from Liverpool every minute," exclaimed the butler.

"My patience, cook, I can't get over you," said Mrs. Canter, with another slight relapse into a second fit of laughter.

"I don't see anything to laugh at. Everyone says my costume is exquisite; and so becoming," said the poor Fuchsia-bell, ready to cry with vexation.

"There's no accounting for taste, then. But you won't see Mrs. Tanner here to-night, nor to-morrow either; she won't be back till Monday, if she is then. Why, there is Mary, as sure as I am a living woman, dressed as great a sight as cook. You have both lost your senses; heads you hadn't to lose; two sillier girls I never met. All I

hope is you have not lost your master's address, for I have come all the way from Liverpool to get it."

"Have you, indeed, Mrs. Canter? I can tell you it. He is at Paris, Hôtel du Louvre, till Monday next," said the other Fuchsia-bell hanging on the arm of the lacquey who had wintered abroad.

"Oh! well, he'll get a telegram that'll keep him awake to-night in the course of another hour or so," said Mrs. Canter mysteriously.

"Whatever has happened?" asked the cook.

"Sure Miss Vera hasn't eloped with the Captain," said Mary.

"Never you mind what has happened; it won't please Mr. Tempest nor his new wife neither. Well, I have seen many sights in my life, but never such a sight as you two girls have made of yourselves. It was worth coming from Liverpool to see you. I must be off again. I am going to sit up with Reuben to-night, as soon as I have telegraphed to Mr. Tempest, and then I am going off by the first train to-morrow morning. You don't mean to tell me that is Mark Brown dressed up like a bishop? Mercy me, what a pass things have come to!"

"Yes; Mark is a bishop and we are the Fuchsia-bells," giggled Mary.

"Future Bells, indeed! I only wish I had the ringing of you two fools I call you, past, present and future, too. Fools you are, fools you always were, and fools you always will be."

"Fuchsia, the flower, not future, and everyone says we have dressed them beautifully," said Mary.

"Dressed them, indeed! You water the fuchsias and answer the bells and you'll do. And if you'll take my advice you'll take off those dresses and put them on the back of the fire as quick as you can, if you wish to have a rag of character left." And with this parting piece of advice Mrs. Canter went out from the bright ball-room into the dark night, leaving the company to speculate freely on what the news she had to communicate to Mr. Ryot Tempest could possibly be; and the Fuchsia-bells to reflect that if they acted upon her suggestion there would certainly not be a rag of their costumes left. And as just then their dresses were dearer to them than their characters, they did not take Norah's advice.

Her appearance, however, had cast a shadow over the Rectory servants; the Fuchsia-bells could not recover their self-complacency, and were inwardly conscious that Mrs. Canter's judgment, though severely expressed, was not far from the truth; and Mark Brown was so excited by her vague and mysterious news, that all pleasure had departed from him, and he only longed for the time when he could get away, that he might pursue his search for Janet. All he knew about her was that she was safe, and this he learnt from his master. Unknown to Mrs. Canter, he had been over to Ashchurch, but unless the people there had deceived him, Janet had not been seen since she left for her father's cottage. Find her he would; of that he

was determined ; and as he twisted and turned one of the Fuchsia-bells through the mysteries of a quadrille, he decided to go to Liverpool by the first train the next day, for he felt certain Mrs. Canter's journey there and back had something to do with Janet, and he began to suspect that Mrs. Tanner knew all about her.

That Mark was right in his last supposition we already know. He was also right in suspecting that Mrs. Canter's mission to Liverpool was connected with Janet. The truth was she had been summoned to Liverpool by telegram on Saturday night, and, on her arrival on Sunday, found the baby very ill—so ill that Janet vowed nothing on earth should induce her to sail the next day ; and Mrs. Tanner being at her wits' end to know what to do, sent for Mrs. Canter to help her.

"We have had a doctor," said Mrs. Tanner, looking at the little suffering baby, which lay moaning on its mother's knee, its little white face drawn with pain.

"Umph ! you might as well have sent for the nearest cat—doctors know nothing of babies ; what does he say is the matter with this one ?" demanded Mrs. Canter.

"Cold, he thinks."

"Nonsense. If he can't think more sense than that he had better not think at all ; the child has no cold ; it is ill because its mother is ill. Janet wasn't fit to travel, and, of course, the child wasn't. Janet is strong, and will get over it ; the child is delicate, and I don't know that it will. As for taking it on board ship to-morrow, it would be murder."

"But the passage is taken," objected Mrs. Tanner. "And Mrs. Jamieson—Tempest, I mean—will never forgive me if Mrs. Reginald misses the boat."

"I can't help that. All I know is Janet can't go to-morrow," said Mrs. Canter, rising from her knees, for she was kneeling by Janet's feet watching the baby. She now beckoned Mrs. Tanner out of the room.

"The child is dying. It may live through to-morrow, but I doubt it, and it is Madam Jamieson who has killed it. If she had left Janet alone for a few days to recover the fatigue of that night, the child might have recovered too, though it would have been ill. Now, I don't think there is a chance for it. We shall see in the morning. What time does the boat leave ?"

"Ten in the morning."

"Well, it'll go without Janet, that is all I have to say. If the passage-money has to be sacrificed, I can't help it ; they'll have to send another telegram to Master Rex, too. Madam has plenty of money, and it is all her doing, so she can pay for it. The child will die, and the mother will break her heart. A good thing she is going away ; she'll have all the less time to brood over it."

Mrs. Canter's diagnosis of the baby's illness turned out to be correct, and her opinion as to the result of the illness also. It lived

through the night, but about the time the New York steamer was leaving the docks, the baby breathed its last.

Its plaintive moans grew weaker and weaker, and at last, without a struggle, it sighed itself into eternity. One gentle sigh, and it was gone, with a smile of welcome to the angel who fetched it on its little thin white face; gone from a world of sorrow and pain and sin to that land where there are neither tears, nor pain, nor sin, but which would not be heaven unless children's voices joined in praising the children's King. We suffer our little children to go unto Him now that we may have them with us for ever hereafter; we forbid them not, pain and grief as it is to lose them, because we know that "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

But no such thoughts brought any comfort to Janet's stricken soul in the first bitterness of her sorrow; she was wild with grief for a few hours. On the night that Reuben stole her baby she had lost it altogether, body and soul, for an hour or two, but now she still held the little lifeless body in her arms; the soul the angels had taken. The little cold clay form lay on her knees, the sweet, innocent smile on the pure baby lips unstained with sin; but she dared not strain the little cold body to her bosom lest she should disturb the awful calm of those infant features; she dared not scream, as in her agony she would fain have done, lest she should disturb the eternal sleep which had fallen on her little one; wake it she knew she could not; not all the wealth, nor all the science, nor all the prayers of living men and women could do that, and yet wealth and science and prayer are three mighty powers.

She was still full of life and youth and strength, but this precious object of her affections was dead; never again would those smiling baby-lips move; never again those delicate, transparent eyelids open; never again would those tender tiny baby fingers clutch at her dress. Her treasure was dead, and, in the first agony of her sorrow, Janet felt one half of her had died with it.

She was stabbed to the heart when the child drew its last breath, but so long as it lay on her knees the knife was not withdrawn, and, as the wounded savage dreads the withdrawing of the arrowhead so she dreaded the removal of her child.

"Take him away, Aunt Norah," she said, at last. And as Norah with streaming eyes, carried the little smiling corpse out of the room, a rush of grief flooded Janet's soul, and she threw herself on the floor in the wildness of her sorrow.

They left her alone, poor broken-hearted mother, for awhile, and by degrees she grew calmer, but no persuasion could induce her to look again at her darling. It must be buried, of course, but let her know nothing of the painful details. She was now possessed with one idea: to get to her husband as quickly as possible.

"I can't stay here; I shall go mad if I do. I must go to Rex, Aunt Norah; send me to Rex."

"Yes, child, yes ; but we must send for Mr. Tempest to arrange the passage for you, and there is only one way of doing that. I must go to Woodford to-night, get his address from those silly servants of his and telegraph to him," said Mrs. Canter.

"Then go, Aunt Norah ; please go at once," cried Janet. And so Norah went.

It struck her several times during her visit that Janet had something on her mind, and for this reason was so impatient to get to her husband, for hitherto she had evinced no desire to go until he sent for her. Janet was strangely silent as to her visit to her father, and was very angry with the doctor when he said the baby had taken cold. Altogether, she puzzled her aunt.

Mrs. Canter was unwilling to leave Janet, but she could not be away for more than another night ; and Mrs. Tanner, although fear of Mrs. Ryot Tempest's displeasure had half paralysed her, was capable of taking care of Janet. And so Mrs. Canter left her with an easy conscience.

Life was just now full of charm to Norah Canter ; she was truly sorry Janet had lost her baby, and equally sorry that Reuben was lying dangerously ill in the cottage hospital ; but to find herself wanted in three places at once was a delightful sensation, only marred by the physical conditions which prevented her from supplying the threefold claims on her presence. She was, no doubt, a remarkable woman, but she was not ubiquitous. So she could not be with Janet at Liverpool, with Reuben at Woodford, and with the little Canthers and the linen at Marling. But she did her best, and since a neighbour had offered to sleep with her children for two nights, she proposed spending Monday night with Reuben.

On leaving the ball-room, where her laughter was partly due to over-excitement, she first of all sent off a telegram to Mr. Ryot Tempest, informing him of the death of his grandson, and then she went to the hospital to sit up with Reuben, who was the only patient, while the nurse went to bed for a good night's rest. In point of fact, this was a work of supererogation on her part, for the nurse could get help if she required it ; but it pleased Mrs. Canter to think her services indispensable, and though she had been up all the previous night with Janet and the baby, she entered on her duties as fresh as a new-laid egg.

Reuben still lay in a critical condition. The fever ran high, he knew no one, and he spent the greater part of the night in tossing restlessly about his bed, talking deliriously. Mrs. Canter tried to make out from his rambling words what had really taken place on the night of Janet's return, for she didn't altogether believe Janet's version of the story : which was, that missing her father in the course of the night, she had gone out to look for him, and not finding him, had wandered on and on until she fell exhausted on Mrs. Tanner's door-step. Not a word did Janet breathe of the disap-

pearance of her baby, and she was as certain as her aunt that the child did not die of cold, though her very anxiety to prove this struck Mrs. Canter as peculiar and somewhat suspicious.

At first Norah thought that Reuben's constant cries of "The child, the child; where is the child?" referred to Janet; but as the night wore on, and time after time he started up from a restless sleep exclaiming: "I left it here: where is it?" she felt certain he referred to the baby, and remembering where he had been found, she gradually convinced herself that Reuben had certainly seen the baby, and she suspected had hidden it away from Janet.

Towards morning he grew more violent, and it was as much as she could do to hold him, shrunk as he already was, in bed, as time after time he started up screaming in a voice of agony: "I didn't do it! I didn't do it!"

Then he would mutter unintelligibly for some minutes and then Norah caught Vera's name and Janet's; and once he called out distinctly: "I saved her life; thank the Lord, I saved her life," but whether he referred to Janet or Vera or the baby Mrs. Canter could not tell.

She was not sorry when at seven o'clock the nurse came to relieve guard, though Reuben was then sleeping fitfully.

"If I didn't know Mr. Foreman so well, I should say he had something on his mind: he is always raving about some child, and declaring 'he didn't do it,' though what he didn't do I don't know. But sick people have strange fancies," remarked the nurse.

Mrs. Canter assented to this last proposition as she donned her widow's bonnet. Then she stooped and kissed her brother. And then, as she made her way to the station, she racked her brains to discover what could have taken place on that eventful night.

Even when she had made large allowance for Janet's desire to get to her husband, it struck her as very strange that she should think of leaving England while her father lay in so critical a state; and still more strange that Janet should have been found fainting on Mrs. Tanner's door-step, and Reuben insensible by the canal: unless, as she suspected, Reuben had turned his daughter and her baby out of his house, and had afterwards repented and gone to look for her.

"It is no use puzzling over it; it is a mystery, and I can't get to the bottom of it," was the conclusion she finally arrived at as the train reached Marling, where her thoughts now reverted to the little Canters and her professional duties.

Reuben's illness and Janet's loss were driven from her mind as soon as she set foot in her laundry by the criminal conduct of one of her washerwomen whom she caught in the very act of soaping some flannel garments. Now to soap flannel was in Mrs. Canter's code the one sin for which there is no forgiveness, and before she had been home five minutes, the sinner had been bundled out neck and crop.

"If I had been a few hours later : which, if poor Reuben had died, I should have been : there would not have been a single flannel thing in the place worth a halfpenny. If I have told you women once I have told you a thousand times flannels are never to be soaped, but are to be washed in a lather or they all shrink. But I might as well get a pipe and blow bubbles as waste my breath in talking to you."

A suppressed giggle went through the laundry at the idea of Mrs. Canter indulging in so puerile an occupation as blowing bubbles ; and in a few minutes Norah had taken off her weeds and was occupying the offending woman's place at the wash-tub ; her mind wandering constantly from the flannels and the lather to the telegram she had sent off the previous night.

This telegram was brief and condensed as a telegram should be and rarely is ; moreover, it was to the point.

"Grandson dead. Come at once." So it ran ; and it left Mr. Ryot Tempest in no doubt as to the course which he was expected to pursue.

It was not pleasant to be summoned home so abruptly on his honeymoon, and Mr. Tempest knew Mrs. Canter well enough to guess that she experienced a certain grim satisfaction in telegraphing to him as a bridegroom that his grandson was dead. It at once dashed all romance to the ground and took the sugar off the wedding-cake as it was intended to do. If he could by any possibility have got off going to Liverpool, he would have done so for many reasons. It was a troublesome business he had to settle when he arrived ; it was disagreeable to be torn from the arms of his bride ; and last, but not least, he was a bad sailor, and the passage was a positive terror to him. He soon found, though, he must go, and go at once, or incur his wife's displeasure, for she was considerably ruffled by the telegram. He could see she had great difficulty in controlling her temper, and had not the slightest intention of forfeiting one penny of the passage money if she could help it.

"You must go at once, Ryot, dear. Tanner is a perfect fool, and that dreadful woman, Canter, will only make matters still worse. As for Janet, I suppose she is helpless. I am afraid you can't get her off by Thursday's boat ; you can't arrive in time ; but go by next Monday's packet she must, even if you have to stay and see her off," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who by the way had introduced a hyphen into her husband's name.

And Mr. Tempest, feeling as if he were in the presence of a volcano, which might at any moment break out into an eruption, meekly agreed to every suggestion, and started off by the earliest train on Tuesday morning, leaving his Peerage and his Lemprière at Paris, since his time and his thoughts would be so fully occupied, he would have no leisure for study. To his great relief the baby was buried an hour or two before he arrived, and as Janet was now poss-

essed with the one idea of getting to her husband as soon as possible, he had no difficulty in persuading her to start by Thursday's boat ; but what arrangement he made with the company as to her passage-money was a profound secret between them and him. All the wife of his bosom was ever told was, that there was nothing extra to pay. If there was, Mr. Ryot-Tempest and his hyphen paid it and sinned against truth.

Janet sailed early on Thursday, leaving Mr. Ryot-Tempest plenty of time to get on to Paris that night if he chose. But his little body quailed before the thought of crossing the Channel so soon again, and he resolved to have a good night's rest in his own home before encountering the miseries of the steamer. Accordingly he had an early luncheon and then left Liverpool for Woodford by the same train Mrs. Canter had travelled by on the previous Monday.

Now the fancy ball at the Grange had been so successful, that the Rectory servants had determined to return the hospitality they had received, by giving a party on a smaller scale, and as ill-luck would have it they chose Thursday evening for their entertainment ; so that when Mr. Ryot-Tempest arrived, the fun had begun.

A sound of revelry greeted him as he walked into the hall, and on the stairs sat one of the Fuchsia-bells with the continental lacquey's arm round her waist.

"Oh ! Mr. Simmons, you do talk so beautifully, it is like a book. Law ! here's master !" exclaimed Mary, rising to her feet and clinging to the balusters to support her, as she caught sight of Mr. Ryot-Tempest.

He glanced in horrified amazement from the pale green satin body down to the yellow shoes and stockings, and then up from the yellow shoes and stockings to the green satin body and Mary's crimson face and neck.

"Mary ! What is the meaning of this unseemly attire ?"

"Oh, dear, sir ! if you please, sir ! we are having a few friends in and I am a Fuchsia-bell, sir, but I would not have had you see me like this for worlds, sir," and Mary began to sob hysterically, while the lacquey slipped into the drawing-room where the dancing was going on, to warn the guests of Mr. Ryot-Tempest's unwelcome presence.

"A few lunatics apparently ; a more indecent scene in the house of a Christian clergyman I cannot conceive. Go upstairs and take off that disreputable costume, and when you are decently clothed, come to my study," said Mr. Tempest, who could catch through the open drawing-room door a glimpse of what to him looked like Pandemonium, as Mark Brown, masquerading as a bishop, danced past with Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's maid in his arms.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest had not the moral courage to face this assembly, so he turned to the dining-room just as the music ceased and the guests were made aware of his presence.

To his surprise supper was laid out in the dining-room, and as good a supper as anyone could wish to sit down to. Indeed, tired and hungry as he was, he longed to sit down and dine himself.

"What am I to do? I can't send them away supperless, and I can't countenance such wanton conduct; what a dilemma I am in! I wish I had not come home," he muttered to himself as he made his way to his study hoping to take refuge there.

But again he was doomed to disappointment, the study had been turned into a cloak-room and some of the furniture from the drawing-room moved into it; while on a sofa sat the other Fuchsia-bell and the Grange butler again personating the Prince of Wales.

The guilty pair rose to their feet and turned as pale as if they were in the presence of a ghost when Mr. Ryot-Tempest appeared. The cook had sufficient presence of mind to seize an antimacassar and wrap round her red shoulders and arms, while she devoutly wished the ground would open and swallow up her and the Fuchsia-bell, calyx, petals, stamens and all.

"Cook, I believe I should be justified in ordering your immediate removal to the county asylum. I will, however, content myself with requesting you to retire, and when you are decently clad I shall have more to say to you. George, my confidence in you is shaken; I will say no more. It will be for your mistress to decide what course she will pursue. Meanwhile, kindly tell all who are present I must request that the dancing be stopped; but I hope no one will leave till they have had a good supper."

The discomfited Fuchsia-bell had left the room long before this speech was ended, and at its conclusion the butler, muttering some confused thanks, was only too glad to escape.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest sank on to a chair to recover from the shock his servants had given him. He had not been seated long before Mark Brown, in his ordinary dress, looking as smug and as innocent as his master could wish, entered the room. "I have been away from home for a few days' holiday or this would never have happened; but I hope, sir, seeing it is in honour of your marriage, you will overlook it. Cook is young, sir, and so is Mary."

"Their conduct is quite inexcusable; Mark, say no more. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest will deal with the matter. Meanwhile, is it possible for me to have a room to myself in my own house, and something to eat after my fatiguing journey?"

"Certainly, sir. I'll take some hot water to your room, and by the time you are ready, supper will be here for you," said Mark.

And in ten minutes' time Mr. Ryot-Tempest returned to find his study cleared and a tempting supper set out for him; three or four men-servants having devoted their energies to getting it ready. By his plate were placed some letters and papers, and among them was a letter from Captain Raleigh telling of his accidental meeting with Vera, and asking whether, now that her home-life would be so

different, Mr. Ryot-Tempest would reconsider his decision and consent to the marriage. A postscript announced that Captain Tempest had written to Paris to the same effect.

That postscript was destined to play a more important part than the writer intended; for it eventually, and before many days had elapsed threw a very strong light on the character of Mr. Ryot-Tempest's second wife.

Captain Raleigh's letter gave him so much to think of that he postponed interviewing the Fuchsia-bells till the next morning, when they received as long and as severe a lecture on their unseemly conduct as they deserved. They had just been dismissed when the Grange servants arrived to apologise, and were treated to a long and very similar discourse, and by the time these duties were fulfilled, Mr. Ryot-Tempest was obliged to start for Paris.

He was inclined to give his consent to Captain Raleigh's proposal, but before deciding he wished to consult his wife and to see what his brother had to urge on the subject. So he deferred answering the letter until he reached Paris, and Vera's happiness meanwhile hung trembling in the balance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARK BROWN IS DIPPED.

MARK BROWN's journey to Liverpool in search of Janet was a failure. He left Woodford early on Tuesday morning after the fancy-ball at the Grange, and reached Liverpool in the middle of the day, and spent the afternoon and evening, and the whole of the following day, wandering about the city in the forlorn hope of meeting Janet. By Thursday morning his patience was exhausted, and, having arrived at the conclusion that he was engaged on a wild-goose chase, he returned to Woodford, baffled and angry, but more determined than ever to discover the truth about Janet.

Cross and disappointed as he was, he consented to put on his bishop's dress and act as host, when he heard there was to be a party at the Rectory that evening; partly for the sake of the supper, partly because there was some chance that Mrs. Tanner, who was expected home that day, might be present, and partly because the excitement diverted his thoughts from Janet, with whom he was more madly in love than ever.

His astonishment when the lacquey told him his master was in the house was only equalled by his anxiety to get out of his masquerading attire before Mr. Ryot-Tempest caught sight of him. He failed in this, but he was unconscious of his failure since the Rector thought it better to take no notice of the indiscretion.

What could have brought Mr. Ryot-Tempest home so suddenly in the midst of his honeymoon?

This question exercised Mark greatly, and his first action, after changing his clothes, was to examine his master's portmanteau to see where he came from. He had no difficulty in discovering, for Mr. Ryot-Tempest was very precise and old-fashioned in such matters, and his portmanteau was duly labelled "Passenger from Liverpool to Woodford." Clearly, then, his journey was connected with Janet, for that she had been, or was still, at Liverpool, Mark felt certain.

The next morning, when he went to sweep Mr. Ryot-Tempest's study, he carefully searched for any letters which might throw some light on the matter, but with no success, for Mr. Ryot-Tempest was exceedingly particular about his letters, and never left them about. In the waste-paper basket, however, Mark had the luck to find Mrs. Canter's telegram. It was torn, but he pieced it together and read it; and gnashed his teeth with rage as he did so.

"Grandson dead; come at once," read Mark; and the telegram was from Mrs. Canter, giving an address in Liverpool of a street Mark remembered to have passed down once or twice. To know that he had been so near Janet without discovering her made him curse his ill-luck; but to learn that Reginald Tempest was the father of Janet's child made him curse both Janet and Reginald. And yet, though the telegram told him much, it did not tell him all. It did not tell him Janet was Rex's wife, and it never occurred to his ignoble mind that she was so.

Full of anger and revenge as he was, he managed to conceal his feelings from his master, and as soon as Mr. Ryot-Tempest was safely off the premises he started again for Liverpool, though this second journey made a large hole in his wages. But what did he care for that, seeing he had Janet's address in his pocket, and, as he supposed, such evidence against her as must compel her to marry him?

On reaching the house in Liverpool he discovered three things. First, that Mrs. Tanner had returned to Woodford with Mr. Ryot-Tempest; so he might have obtained all the information he wanted from her, and saved himself the trouble and expense of this journey to Liverpool. Next, he found out that Janet was no less a person than Mrs. Reginald Tempest. And, lastly, that she had sailed for New York, where her husband was to meet her, the previous morning. All this information he learnt from the servant at the lodging-house, and he went from the door not loving, but hating Janet with all his heart. So long as there was any chance of possessing her, he had loved her as well as he was capable of loving anyone, if, indeed, such love as his was worthy the name; but now he knew he could never call her his wife—in all probability, would never see her again—his love was turned to hate.

He hated Janet, he hated Reuben, he hated Rex; most of all, perhaps, he hated Vera, who he felt sure had abetted Rex in winning her; though, as we know, Vera was innocent of any such thing. Yes, he hated them, and he would be revenged on them if possible.

Janet and Rex were out of his power ; the Atlantic would soon roll between him and them ; but there remained Reuben and Vera ; on them he would wreak his vengeance.

He was in no hurry ; he could bide his time. Meanwhile, there was their meeting at midnight by the canal-side to be accounted for ; there was a fine piece of evidence against them ; who could tell to what account that might not be turned ?

Mark returned to the Rectory in a vile temper, and for the next few weeks made himself so odious to cook and Mary that they wrote to Mrs. Canter and told her if Mark didn't leave when their master and mistress returned, they should, as he was simply unbearable.

About a week before the bride and bridegroom were expected home, Mark took it into his head that he would go to the hospital and pay Reuben a visit. He was convalescent now, Mark knew ; and perhaps the news he had to tell him might do him good, thought Mark maliciously.

Reuben by this time was on the road to recovery. The fever had left him, but he was as weak as a rat ; and the day Mark called he was sitting up for the first time for a few hours. His easy-chair was moved to the window that he might look out at the fresh green trees and the blossom-laden hedges of the opposite meadows. His Bible lay on his knee, but the strong muscular hands that used to wield his sledge-hammer so easily were now not strong enough to hold the book for more than two or three consecutive minutes. But this was of little consequence since his head could not stand more than a verse or two at a time. Moreover, to look out at the trees and the bright blue June sky after his illness was an absorbing interest.

"Would you like to see Mark Brown?" asked the nurse of her gigantic patient, whose handsome face and almost pathetic weakness had touched her heart.

"Yes," said Reuben in a weak voice, thinking a word in season might not be wasted on his convert.

"You may go up for ten minutes, but be careful not to excite him. Don't mention his daughter to him. He does not know she has left England yet," said the nurse to Mark Brown as she let him in.

"He'll know it soon, then," thought Mark to himself, as he went upstairs, where, to do him justice, Reuben's altered appearance at first shocked him into prudence.

"Yes ; I am very weak, Mark, but though the Lord has chastened me, He has not given me over to death, and I get stronger daily. And no wonder, if you knew the quantity of nourishment I take, for I am as hungry as a hunter."

"When will you be leaving here?"

"In another week or ten days, I trust."

"It'll be very lonely for you going home to your empty cottage," said Mark, with meaning.

Reuben started, and a troubled look came over his handsome

face, thinned as it was by suffering, both mental and bodily. For, from the time he fell insensible by the hollow tree till he woke to find the fever had left him as weak as the baby he had lost, his mind was a blank. He remembered distinctly every incident of that terrible night up to that point. Since then he knew nothing, and much as he yearned to know what had become of the baby, he had not yet dared to make any inquiries. That Mark could enlighten him he had very little doubt, for the man was an arrant gossip.

"Perhaps it won't be empty," he said, and there was a note of interrogation in his voice.

"Are you thinking of marrying again, then, like the master?" said Mark with an engaging leer.

"No, but I still have Janet," said Reuben doubtfully.

"She won't be much company for you, though; she is in America with her fine gentleman husband by now," said Mark cruelly, watching the effect of his words and inwardly hoping they would wound the stricken man. They did so. For some minutes Reuben did not speak; he hid his pinched, shrunken face with one of his thin hands, and Mark had the satisfaction of seeing some great tears drop through the spread fingers.

"The Lord's will be done," said Reuben at last.

He said it in all sincerity, for his conscience told him he deserved that Janet should leave him without a word of farewell, seeing how he had treated her. But God only knew how hard it was to accept what he considered a just punishment, for something whispered that he had something to forgive as well as Janet.

So he had, and Janet had left a letter with Mrs. Canter, asking her father's forgiveness, but, in Reuben's weak state, they had not yet dared to let him have it, fearing a relapse would follow upon any excitement.

Mark Brown had no such fears. He neither knew nor cared what the result of his news might be on the patient; he had come to have his revenge, and he was having it. But he had another shot to fire yet, and his ten minutes was nearly up.

"Yes," he said. "She and her fine husband are enjoying themselves in America, and her baby is buried here in England."

Reuben clutched the elbows of his chair with his lean hands, glanced like a maniac at the now cowering Mark, burst into a loud laugh, horrible to hear, and fell back insensible.

The nurse heard the laugh, and came rushing in.

"Be off with you and fetch the doctor, if you don't wish to die on the gallows. You have killed him with your silly chatter," she exclaimed angrily as she very unceremoniously pushed Mark out of the room, and then got Reuben to bed again.

The fever returned, and that night Reuben was again tossing deliciously from side to side of his bed. Before the week was out, Mrs. Canter was telegraphed for, as his condition was critical, and

the doctors had not much hope of his recovery. But once again he rallied; a weaker man would have died; but his splendid constitution pulled him through, though the fever left him as weak as an infant. Even now the danger was not over, for another relapse would be fatal. But all immediate danger having passed, Mrs. Canter returned to Marling a day or two before Mr. and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest were expected home.

Before she left Woodford, where it was well-known that Mark Brown was the cause of Reuben's relapse, she had arranged with his fellow-servants to punish him for his disgraceful conduct.

"Let me get him to Marling, and I'll pay him out," had said Mrs. Canter; and then it had been settled that she should take back with her some curtains to wash which could not be trusted to a less experienced laundress, and then Mark should be sent to fetch them the evening before the bride and bridegroom's return.

It was with great difficulty that Mark was induced to go, for he was not anxious to encounter Mrs. Canter. But the other servants were peremptory, and made out the world would come to an abrupt end if their master and mistress returned before the curtains; so in the end he consented; though, could he have seen the preparations Mrs. Canter was making for his reception, he would certainly have refused. She placed her largest wash-tub in the centre of her laundry, about an hour before Mark was expected; then she summoned Mary Jane, and with her assistance filled it from the other wash-tubs: soap-suds, rinsing-water, dirty-water, blue-water, all went in till the monster tub was quite full. Then giving her daughter instructions to show Mark Brown into the laundry when he arrived, Mrs. Canter, vested in a huge apron, her sleeves rolled up over her enormous arms, took up a position in front of a wash-tub at the opposite side of the laundry to the door.

"I'll dip him, and I'll be bound my dipping will do him a deal more good than the one he got at Reuben's chapel," she muttered to herself.

Presently Mark's voice was heard in the kitchen, and the next minute Mary Jane ran in saying: "Mother, here is Mr. Brown."

"Come in, Mark. You have come for the curtains. Here they are. I'll give them to you as soon as I have wiped my hands," said Mrs. Canter, as the unsuspecting Mark walked into the middle of the laundry, and stood waiting in the very spot where Mrs. Canter desired him to be, namely, with his back to the large wash-tub, which was shallow, though of gigantic circumference.

"Before I give you the curtains, I just want to say a word to you," began Mrs. Canter, advancing towards her victim, who retreated a step as she put out one of her crinkled hands and seized him by the collar. A dexterous push, and the next moment Mark was sprawling in the wash-tub, his heels in the air. The tub was slippery, and in trying to extricate himself from his undignified position, his head and

shoulders were immersed, but by dint of much struggling and splashing, he at last managed to scramble out, Mrs. Canter haranguing him all the while.

"There, now perhaps you'll know better than to go and upset a sick man, as you upset Reuben ; small thanks to you that he is still alive. You can go home and tell Mr. Tempest I have dipped you this time ; and if I have washed some of the mud off your soul, it is the best bit of washing I ever did in my life. As for the curtains, I'll send them by train ; I always meant to. You can have the law of me if you like."

By the time Mrs. Canter had finished, Mark had regained his feet, and fearful lest the dose should be repeated, rushed out into the road with the water pouring in torrents off him, cursing and swearing as he went in a manner frightful to hear.

"Oh! mother, did poor Mark fall into the wash-tub?" asked Mary Jane.

"Never you mind ; don't ask questions, or perhaps you'll have the same sort of accident," replied her mother, as she proceeded to wipe up the water Mark's passage through the kitchen had left.

This done, she tidied herself and took her sewing into the drying-ground ; and wondered as she worked whether Reuben would recover, and when it would be safe to give him Janet's letter. And then her thoughts flew to Vera, and she wondered how she would get on with her step-mother, and how many changes the new Mrs. Tempest would make in the domestic arrangements at the Rectory : and above all, whether Mr. Tempest had yet repented of his folly, by which she meant his second marriage.

(To be continued.)



PRECEPTS FOR THE WELL-ORDERING OF LIFE.

OF LENDING AND BORROWING.

LENDING and borrowing may well go together ; for they are like the Siamese twins—in principle inseparable. He who lends encourages borrowing ; he who borrows depends on lending.

We do not, of course, refer here to business lending, such as forms the chief part of the banker's trade, and which forms a considerable portion of the rich solicitor's lucrative profession ; because without such transactions business would stagnate, and the wings of enterprise would be sadly clipped. In such cases either credit or security stands against the loan, and, in strictness, it is rather a sale of money for a certain period than a loan—just as one may hire or buy the use of a horse for half-a-year, as well as for a week, a day, or an hour. Legitimate banking-business is the sale of the use of money for definite periods.

We refer rather to that kind of friendly and promiscuous lending, which would wholly lose its character were there any definite attempt to put it on a business basis. And there are no more insidiously dangerous indulgences than such lending and borrowing.

Shakespeare strikes the note very clearly here in Polonius's advice to Laertes—a passage which itself might be taken to prove the absolute absurdity of Voltaire's notion of the character which has infected the whole of the French criticism of "Hamlet"—to the effect that "the good man, Polonius, is an old dotard, much more crazy than Hamlet." Polonius says :—

Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

"Who goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing," says the old proverb ; and another, namely Franklin, has it : "He that would know the worth of money, let him go and try to borrow some." A popular rhyme has it :—

This world is the best we live in,
To lend, or to spend, or to give in ;
But to beg or to borrow, or to get a man's own,
'Tis the very worst world, sir, that ever was known.

There is a Scotch proverb, beyond all others quaint and direct : "He that lends his pot may seethe his kail in his loof" (*i.e.*, may boil his broth in his hand).

Lord Bacon was wont to commend the advice of the plain old man at Buxton, that sold besoms. A proud, lazy young fellow came to him for a besom upon trust, to whom the old man said : " Friend, hast thou no money ? Borrow of thy back, and borrow of thy belly, they'll never ask thee again ; I shall be dunning thee every day." It is the same in high as in low life :—

Lend Spunge a guinea ! Ned, you'd best refuse,
And *give* him half—sure half's enough to lose.

Sir Henry Taylor, after having set it down as a rule—" never to lend money to a friend, unless you are satisfied that he does wisely and well in borrowing it," goes on to say : " Some men will lend money to a friend, as it were, to purchase the rights of remonstrance ; but the right so purchased is worth nothing. You may buy the man's ears, but not his heart or understanding."

The first time Douglas Jerrold saw a celebrated song-writer, the latter said to him, " Youngster, have you sufficient confidence in me to lend me a guinea ? " " Oh, yes," said Jerrold, " I have all the confidence, but I do not have the guinea." Sir Henry Taylor thus briefly and naively describes the usual course of borrowing :—

" The ordinary course of borrowing is something like this :—A., becoming embarrassed, through some (perhaps venial) imprudence, is kindly assisted by his friends, B. C. and D. who, however, do not altogether approve his conduct, but then it would be ungenerous in them, under the protection of the favours they are conferring, to assail him with reproaches. So far all goes smoothly between A. on the one hand, and B., C. and D. on the other. But A., having, by the loans he has received, staved off any immediate consequences of his imprudence, is ' under a rather stronger temptation than before to forego the severe self-denial which would set him right again. He has now broken the ice in the matter of asking favours ; he has incurred whatever humiliation belongs to it ; and, having begged once, it costs him comparatively little to beg again. This process of begging and borrowing goes on, therefore, becoming continually more frequent and less efficacious ; and as the borrower grows less and less scrupulous, he nourishes his pride (the ordinary refuge of those who lose their independence) and resents every repulse as an insult. B. C. and D. then discover that they are not to be thanked for what they have lent, but rather reproached for not lending more and more ; whereupon they withdraw their friendship ; and those who ignorantly look on, or, perhaps, hear the story of A. whilst B. C. and D. are silent, out of consideration for him, make remarks of inconstancy in friendship and the manner in which men are forsaken by their friends ; and the desertion only leads the man to consider himself as a castaway and to throw himself into still more reckless and shameless courses."

And, by way of further discouragement of lending, Sir Henry goes on to say, in his simple and effective style :—

I have never known a debtor who was not, in his own estimation, an injured man ; and I have generally found that those who have not suffered by them were disposed to side with them ; for it is the weak who make the outcry, and it is from the outcry that the world is apt to judge. They who lend money to spendthrifts should be prepared, therefore, to suffer in their reputation as well as in their purse. Let us learn from the Son of Sirach :—Many, when a thing was lent them, reckoned it to be found, and put them to trouble that helped them. Till he hath received, he will kiss a man's hand ; and for his neighbour's money he will speak submissively ; but when he should repay, he will prolong the time, and return words of grief and complain of the time. If he prevail, he shall hardly receive the half and will count as if he had found it ; if not, he hath deprived him of his money, and he hath gotten him an enemy without cause ; he payeth him with cursings and railings and for honour he will pay him disgrace !

And Sir Henry very characteristically adds the following :—

I have known a man who was never rich, and was indeed in a fair way to be ruined, make a present of several hundred pounds, under what he probably conceived to be an impulse of generous friendship ; but if that man had been called upon to get up an hour earlier in the morning to serve his friend he would not have done it. The fact was that he had no real value for money, no real care for consequences which were not to be immediate : in parting with some hundreds of pounds he flattered his self-love with a show of self-sacrifice ; in parting with an hour's folding of the hands to sleep, the self-sacrifice would have been real, and the show of it not very magnificent.

On the declining of requests for loans we may set down the following :—

"In declining a suit," says Sir Arthur Helps, "do it without assigning any reason ; for remember that in giving any reason at all, you lay some foundation for a future request."

And again :—

"To withstand solicitations for loans is often a great trial of firmness. . . . The refusal which is at once the most safe from vacillation, and perhaps as little calculated to give offence as any, is the point-blank refusal without reasons assigned."

And here we cannot help recalling the anecdote of the old Scotch Burgher elder, who was asked for a loan of fifty pounds by a friend who was inclined to be rather free in his ways of life. "Well, John," said the old Burgher, "I ken we wad quarrel afore I got the money back, and sae I think it best we sud quarrel while the money is in my pouch [pocket]."

The following, from the *Saturday Review* several years ago, is well worth inserting here :—

"One of the most striking peculiarities about thriftless people is a

constant expectation of sympathy, whenever their carelessness brings them into embarrassment. They speak of money as housekeepers speak of servants. The whole fault lies on one side, and that of course not their own. Money is to them what her trunks and band-boxes and baskets are to a nervous old lady on a journey; only the journey never ends, and the trunks are constantly missing, and the bottoms of the band-boxes perpetually tumbling out. The demon of greed bears them an especial grudge, and ever eludes their grasp. Nobody worthy of the name of friend can refuse sympathy for those against whom fortune is so spiteful. Then they will advance a stage, and demand practical illustrations of sympathy from their friends in the shape of a 'temporary obligation.' The obligation soon changes its character, and becomes consolidated. Friends as well as fortune quarrel with these unlucky beings, who then either drift into down-right beggary, or else, just contriving to hold their heads above water, pass their days in one continued and sordid struggle. Why we should sympathise with the folly and carelessness which produce such results is not evident. There are some forms of weakness which we may justly compassionate, but the loose self-indulgence and silly neglect which are comprised in thriftlessness deserve contempt rather than pity. Solvency is, after all, one of the prime social virtues, and the people who flounder helplessly through the world for lack of it have nearly always themselves to blame for the shallows and miseries in which their life is bound."

Suretyship is a kind of device by which credit is lent instead of money—a fact which doubles the risk in disguising the danger. Here Solomon, who declared severely enough against lending and borrowing, is at hand with his advice:—"He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it, and he that hateth suretyship is sure." The Scottish proverb, "Often the cautioner [or surety] pays the debt," is short and decisive enough; and the whole subject may be closed by us with the following shrewd passage from Lord Burleigh:—

"Beware of suretyship for thy best friends. He that payeth another man's debts, seeketh his own decay. But, if thou canst not choose otherwise, rather lend thy money thyself upon freed bonds, although thou borrow it. So shalt thou secure thyself and pleasure thy friend. Neither borrow money of a neighbour, nor a friend, but of a stranger, where, paying for it, thou shalt hear no more of it. Otherwise thou shalt eclipse thy credit, lose thy freedom, and yet pay as dear as to another. But in borrowing of money be precious of thy word; for he that hath care of keeping days of payment is lord of another man's purse."

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

IT was a lovely summer's day; and Madame Cardiac's neat little slip of a kitchen was bright and hot with the morning sun. Madame, herself, stood before the paste-board, making a green apricot tart. Of pies and tarts à la mode Anglaise, Monsieur Jules was more fond than a schoolboy; and of all tarts known to the civilised world, none can equal that of a green apricot.

Madame had put down the rolling-pin, and stood for the moment idle, looking at Flore Pamart, and listening to something that Flore was saying. Flore, whisking out of the petite Maison Rouge a few minutes before, ostensibly to do her morning's marketings, had whisked straight off to the Rue Pomme Cuite, and was now seated at the corner of the pastry table, telling a story to Madame Cardiac.

"It was madame's own fault," she broke off in her tale to remark: "if madame *will* give me her orders in French, and half the time I can't understand them. She had an engagement to take the tea at Madame Smith's in the Rue Lambeau, was what I thought she said to me, and that I must present myself there at half-past nine to walk home with her. Well, madame, I went accordingly, and found nobody at home there but the bonne, Thomasine. Her master was dining out at the Sous-préfet's, and her mistress had gone out with some more ladies to walk on the pier as it was so fine an evening. Naturally I thought my mistress was one of the ladies, and sat there waiting for her and chatting with Thomasine. Madame Smith came in at ten o'clock, and then she said that my lady had not been there and that she had not expected her."

"She must have gone to tea elsewhere," observed Madame Cardiac.

"Clearly, madame; as I afterwards found. It was to Madame Lambert's in the Rue Lothaire that I ought to have gone. I could only go home, as madame sees; and when I arrived there I found the house door wide open. Just as I entered, a frightful cry came from the kitchen, and there I found her dropped down on the floor, half senseless with terror. Madame, she avowed to me that she had seen Mademoiselle Lavinia standing near her in the moonlight."

Madame Cardiac took up her rolling-pin slowly before she spoke. "I know she has a fancy that she appears in the house."

"Madame Cardiac, I think she *is* in the house," said Flore

solemnly. And for a minute or two Madame Cardiac rolled her paste in silence.

"Monsieur Fennel used to see her; I am sure he did; and now his wife sees her," went on the woman. "I think that is the secret of his running away so much: he can't bear the house and what is haunting it."

"It is altogether a dreadful thing; I lie awake thinking of it," bewailed Mary Cardiac.

"But it cannot be let go on like this," said Flore; "and that's what has brought me running here this morning—to ask you, madame, whether anything can be done. If she is left alone to see these sights, she'll die of it. When she got up this morning she was shivering like a leaf in the wind. Has madame noticed that she is wasting away? For the matter of that, so was Monsieur Fennel."

Madame Cardiac, beginning to line her shallow dish with paste, nodded in assent. "He ought to be here with her," she remarked.

"Catch him," returned Flore, in a heat. "Pardon, madame, but I must avow I trust not that gentleman. He is no good. He will never come back to stay at the house so long as there is in it—what is there. He dare not; and I would like to ask him why not. A man with the conscience at ease could not be that sort of coward. Honest men do not fly away, all scared, when they fancy they see a revenant."

Deeming it might be unwise to pursue the topic from this point, Madame Cardiac said she would go and see Mrs. Fennel in the course of the day, and Flore clattered off, her wooden shoes echoing on the narrow pavement of the Rue de la Pomme Cuite.

But, as Madame Cardiac was crossing the Place Ronde in the afternoon to pay her visit, she met Mrs. Fennel. Of course, Flore's communication was not to be mentioned.

"Ah," said Madame Cardiac, readily, "is it you? I was coming to ask if you would like to take a walk on the pier with me. It is a lovely afternoon, and not too hot."

"Oh, I'll go," said Nancy. "I came out because it is so miserable at home. When Flore went off to the fish market after breakfast, I felt more lonely than you would believe. Mary," dropping her voice, "I saw Lavinia last night."

"Now I won't listen to that," retorted Mary Cardiac, as if she were reprimanding a child. "Once give in to our nerves and fancies, there's no end to the tricks they play us. I wish, Ann, your house were in a more lively situation, where you might sit at the window and watch the passers-by."

"But it isn't," said Nancy, sensibly. "It looks upon nothing but the walls."

Walking on, they sat down upon a bench that stood back from the port, facing the harbour. Nearly opposite lay the English boat, busily loading for London. The sight made Nancy sigh.

"I wish it would bring Edwin the next time it comes in," she said in low tones.

"When do you expect him?"

"I don't know *when*," said poor Nancy with emphasis. "Mary, I am beginning to think he stays away because he is afraid of seeing Lavinia."

"Men are not afraid of those foolish things, Ann."

"He is. Recollect those fits of terror he had. He used to hear her following him up and down stairs; used to see her on the landings."

Madame Cardiac found no ready answer. She had witnessed one of those fits of terror herself.

"Last night," went on Mrs. Fennel, after a pause, "when Flore had left me and I could only shiver in my bed, and not expect to sleep, I became calm enough to ask myself *why* Lavinia should come back again, and what it is she wants. Can you think why, Mary?"

"Not I," said Madame Cardiac lightly. "I shall only believe she does come when she shows herself to me."

"And I happened on the thought that, possibly, she may be wanting us to inquire into the true cause of her death. It might have been ascertained at the time but for my stopping the action of the doctors, you know."

"Ann, my dear, you should exercise a little common-sense. I would ask you what end the ascertaining it now would answer, to her, dead, or to you living?"

"It might be seen that she could have been cured, had we only known what the malady was."

"But you did not know; the doctors did not know. It could only have been discovered, even at your showing, after her death, not in time to save her."

"I wish M. Dupuis had come more quickly on the Monday night!" sighed Nancy. "I am always wishing it. You can picture what it was, Mary—Lavinia lying in that dreadful agony and no doctor coming near her. Edwin was gone so long—so long! He could not wake up M. Dupuis. I think now that the bell was out of order."

"Why do you think that now? Captain Fennel must have known whether the bell answered to his summons, or not."

"Well," returned Nancy, "this morning when Flore got back with the fish, she said I looked very ill. She had just seen M. Dupuis in the Place Ronde, and she ran out again and brought him in—"

"Did you mention to him this fancy of seeing Lavinia?" hastily interrupted Madame Cardiac.

"No, no; I don't talk of that to people. Only to you and Flore; and—yes—I did tell Mrs. Smith. I let M. Dupuis think I was ill with grieving after Lavinia, and we talked a little about her. I said

how I wished he could have been here sooner on the Monday night, and that my husband had rung several times before he could arouse him. M. Dupuis said that was a mistake; he had got up and come as soon as he was called; he was not asleep at the time, and the bell had rung but once."

"What an extraordinary thing!" exclaimed Mary Cardiac. "I know your husband said he rang many times."

"That's why I now think the bell must have been out of order; but I did not say so to M. Dupuis," returned Nancy. "He is a kind old man, and it would grieve him: for of course we know doctors *ought* to keep their door-bells in order."

Madame Cardiac rose in silence but full of thought, and they continued their walk. It was low water in the harbour, but the sun was sparkling and playing on the waves out at sea. On the pier they found Rose and Anna Bosanquet; and in chatting with them Nancy's mood became more cheerful.

That same evening, on that same pier, Mary Cardiac spoke a few confidential words to her husband. They sat at the end of it, and the beauty of the night, so warm and still, induced them to linger. The bright moon sailed grandly in the heavens and glittered upon the water that now filled the harbour, for the tide was in. Most of the promenaders had turned down the pier again, after watching out the steamer. What a fine passage she would make, and was making, cutting there so smoothly through the crystal sea!

Mary Cardiac began in a low voice, though no one was near to listen and the waves could not hear her. She spoke pretty fully of a haunting doubt that lay upon her mind, as to whether Lavinia had died a natural death.

"If we make the best of it," she concluded, "her dying in that strangely sudden way was unusual; you know that, Jules; quite unaccountable. It never *has* been accounted for."

M. Jules, gazing on the gentle waves as they rose and fell in the moonlight at the mouth of the harbour, answered nothing.

"He had so much to wish her away for, that man: all the money would become Nancy's. And I'm sure there was secret enmity between them—on both sides. Don't you see, Jules, how suspicious it all looks?"

The moonbeams, illumining M. Jules Cardiac's face, showed it to be very impassive, betraying no indication that he as much as heard what his wife was talking about.

"I have not forgotten, I can never forget, Jules, the very singular Fate-reading, or whatever you may please to call it, spoken by the Astrologer Talcke last winter at Miss Bosanquet's *soirée*. You were not in the room, you know, but I related it to you when we arrived home. He certainly foretold Lavinia's death, as I, recalling the words, look upon it now. He said there was some element of evil in their house, threatening and terrible; he repeated it more than once

In their house, Jules, and that it would end in darkness ; which, as everyone understood, meant death : not for Mrs. Fennel ; he took care to tell her that ; but for another. He said the cards were more fatal than he had ever seen them. That evil in the house was Fennel."

Still M. Jules offered no comment.

"And what could be the meaning of those dreams Lavinia had of him, in which he always seemed to be preparing to inflict upon her some fearful ill, and she knew she never could and never would escape it?" ran on Mary Cardiac, her eager, suppressed tones bearing a gruesome sound in the stillness of the night. "And what is the explanation of the fits of terror which have shaken Fennel since the death, fancying he sees Lavinia? Flore said to me this morning that she is sure Lavinia is in the house."

Glancing at her husband to see that he was at the least listening, but receiving no confirmation of it by word or motion, Mary Cardiac continued.

"Those dreams came to warn her, Jules. To warn her to get out of the house while she could. And she made arrangements to go, and in another day or two would have been away in safety. But he was too quick for her."

M. Jules Cardiac turned now to face his wife. "Mon amie, tais toi," said he with authority. "Such a topic is not convenable," he added, still in French, though she had spoken in English. "It is dangerous."

"But, Jules, I believe it *to have been so*."

"All the same, and whether or no, it is not your affair, Marie. Neither must you make it such. Believe me, my wife, the only way to live peaceably ourselves in the world is to let our neighbours' sins alone."

II.

CAPTAIN EDWIN FENNEL was certainly in no hurry to return to Sainteville, for he did not come. Nancy, ailing, weak, wretchedly uncomfortable, wrote letter after letter to him, generally sending them over by some friend or other, who might be crossing, to be put in a London letter-box, and so evade the foreign postage. Once or twice she had written to Mrs. James, telling of her lonely life and that she wanted Edwin either to take her out of the dark and desolate house, or else to come back to it himself. Captain Fennel would answer now and again, promising to come—she would be quite sure to see him on one of the first boats if she looked out for their arrival. Nancy did look, but she had not yet seen him. She was growing visibly thinner and weaker. Sainteville said how ill Mrs. Fennel was looking.

One evening at the end of July, when the London steamer was due about ten o'clock, Nancy went to watch it in, as usual, Flore attending her. The port was gay, crowded with promenaders. There had been a concert at the Rooms, and the company was

coming home from it. Mrs. Fennel had not made one: latterly she had felt no spirit for amusement. Several friends met her; she did not tell them she had come down to meet her husband, if haply he should be on the expected boat; she had grown tired and half-ashamed of saying that; she let them think she was only out for a walk that fine evening. There was a yellow glow still in the sky where the sun had set; the north-west was clear and bright with its opal light.

The time went on; the port became deserted, except for a few passing stragglers. Ten o'clock had struck, eleven would soon strike. Flore and her mistress, tired of pacing about, sat down on one of the benches facing the harbour. One of two young men, passing swiftly homewards from the pier, found himself called to.

"Charley! Charley Palliser!"

Charles turned, and recognised Mrs. Fennel. Stepping across to her, he shook hands.

"What do you think can have become of the boat?" she asked. "It ought to have been in nearly an hour ago."

"Oh, it will be here shortly," he replied. "The boat often makes a slow passage when there's no wind. What little wind we have had to-day has been dead against it."

"As I've just said to madame," put in Flore, always ready to take up the conversation. "Mr. Charles knows there's no fear it has gone down, though it may be a bit late."

"Why, certainly not," laughed Charley. "Are you waiting here for it, Mrs. Fennel?"

"Ye—s," she answered, but with hesitation.

"And as it's not even in sight yet, madame had much better go home and not wait, for the air is getting chilly," again spoke Flore.

"We can't see whether it's in sight or not," said her mistress. "It is dark yonder out at sea."

"Shall I wait here with you, Mrs. Fennel?" asked Charley in his good nature.

"Oh, no, no; no, thank you," she answered quickly. "If it does not come in soon, we shall go home."

He wished them good-night, and went onwards. "She is hoping the boat may bring that mysterious brute, Fennel," remarked Charles to his companion.

"Brute, you call him?"

"He is no better than one, to leave his sick wife alone so long," responded Charles in hearty tones. "She has picked up an idea, I hear, that the house is haunted, and shakes in her shoes in it from morning till night."

The two watchers sat on, Flore grumbling. Not for herself, but for her mistress. A sea-fog was rising, and Flore thought madame might take cold. Mrs. Fennel wrapped her light fleecy shawl closer about her chest, and protested she was quite hot. The shawl was

well enough for a warm summer's night, but not for a cold sea-fog. About half-past eleven there suddenly loomed into view through the mist the lights of the steamer, about to enter the harbour.

"There she is!" exultingly cried Nancy, who had been shivering inwardly for some time past, and doing her best not to shiver outwardly for fear of Flore. "And now, Flore, you go home as quickly as you can and make a fire in the salon to warm us. I'm sure he will need one—at sea in this cold fog!"

"If he is come," mentally returned Flore in her derisive heart. She had no faith in the return of Monsieur Fennel by any boat, a day or a night one. But she needed no second prompting to hasten away; was too glad to do it.

Poor Nancy waited on. The steamer came very slowly up the port, or she fancied so; one must be cautious in a fog; and it seemed to her a long time swinging round and settling itself into its place. Then the passengers came on shore one by one, Nancy standing close to look at them. There were only about twenty in all, and Captain Fennel was not one of them. With misty eyes and a rising in her throat and spiritless footsteps, Nancy arrived at her home, the petite Maison Rouge. Flore had the fire burning in the salon; but Nancy was too thoroughly chilled for any salon fire to warm her.

The cold she caught that night struck to her chest. For some days afterwards she was very ill indeed. M. Dupuis attended her, and brought his son once or twice, M. Henri. Nancy got up again, and was, so to say, herself once more; but she did not get up her strength.

She would lie on the sofa in the salon those August days, which were very hot ones, too languid to get off it. Friends would call in to see her; Major and Mrs. Smith, the Miss Bosanquets, the Lamberts, and so on. Madame Cardiac was often there. They would ask her why she did not "make an effort" and sit up and occupy herself with a book or a bit of work, or go out a little; and Nancy's answer was nearly always the same—she would do all that when the weather was somewhat cooler. Charley Palliser was quite a constant visitor. An English damsel, who was casting a covetous eye to Charles, though she might have spared herself the pains, took a fit of jealousy and said one might think sick Nancy Fennel was his sweetheart, going there so often. Charley rarely went empty-handed either. Now it would be half-a-dozen nectarines in their ripe-red loveliness, now some choice peaches, then a bunch of hot-house grapes "purple and gushing," and again an amusing novel just out in England.

"Mary, she is surely dying!"

The sad exclamation came from Stella Featherston. She and Madame Cardiac, going in to take tea at the petite Maison Rouge,

had been sent by its mistress to her chamber above to take off their bonnets. The words had broken from Stella the moment they were alone.

"Sometimes I fear it myself," replied Madame Cardiac. "She certainly grows weaker instead of stronger."

"Does any doctor attend her?"

"M. Dupuis; a man of long experience, kind and clever. I was talking to him the other day, and he as good as said his skill and care seemed to avail nothing: was wasted on her."

"Is it consumption?"

"I think not. She caught a dreadful cold about a month ago, through being out in a night fog, thinly clad; and there's no doubt it left mischief behind; but it seems to me that she is wasting away with inward fever."

"I should get George to run over to see her if I were you, Mary," remarked Stella. "French doctors are very clever, I believe, especially as surgeons, but for an uncertain case like this they don't come up to the English. And George knows her constitution."

They went down to the salon, Mary Cardiac laughing a little at the remark. Stella Featherston had not been long enough in France to part with her native prejudices. The family with whom she lived in Paris had journeyed to Sainteville for a month for what they called "*les eaux*," and Stella accompanied them. They were in lodgings on the port.

Mrs. Fennel seemed more like her old self that evening than she had been for some time past. The unexpected presence of her companion of early days changed the tone of her mind and raised her spirits. Stella exerted all her mirth, talked of their doings in the past, told of Buttermead's doings in the present. Nancy was quite gay.

"Do you ever sing now, Stella?" she suddenly asked.

"Why, no," laughed Stella, "unless I am quite alone. Who would care to hear old ditties sung without music?"

"I should. Oh, Stella, sing me a few!" implored the invalid, her tone quite imploring. "It would bring the dear old days back to me."

Stella Featherston had a most melodious voice, but she did not play. It was not unusual in those days for girls to sing without any accompaniment, as Stella had for the most part done.

"Have you forgotten your Scotch songs, Stella?" asked Mary Cardiac.

"Not I; I like them best of all," replied Miss Featherston. And without more ado she broke into "*Ye banks and braes*."

It was followed by "*The Banks of Allan Water*" and others. Flore stole to the parlour door, and thought she had never heard so sweet a singer. Last of all, Stella began a quaint song that was more of a chant than anything else, low and subdued.

"Woe's me, for my heart is breakin',
 I think on my brither sma',
 And on my sister greetin',
 When I cam' from home awa'.
 And O, how my mither sobbit,
 As she took from me my hand,
 When I left the door of our old house
 To come to this stranger land.

"There's nae place like our ain home,
 O, I would that I were there!
 There's nae home like our ain home
 To be met wi' onywhere.
 And O, that I were back again
 To our farm and fields sae green,
 And heard the tongues of our ain folk,
 And was what I hae been!"

A feeling of despair ran through the whole words; and the tears were running down Ann Fennel's hectic cheeks as the melody died away in a plaintive silence.

"It is what I shall never see again, Stella," she murmured—"the green fields of *our* home; or hear the tongues of all the dear ones there. In my dreams, sometimes, I am at Selby Court, light-hearted and happy, as I was before I left it for this 'stranger land.' Woe's *me*, also, Stella!"

And now I come into the story; I, Johnny Ludlow. For what I have told of it hitherto has not been from any personal knowledge of mine, but from diaries, and from what Mary Cardiac related to me, and from Featherston. It may be regarded as singular that I should have been, so to say, present at its ending, but that I *was* there is as true as anything I ever wrote. The story itself is true in all its chief facts; I have already said that; and it is true that I saw the close of it.

III.

To say that George Featherston, Doctor-in-ordinary at Buttermead, felt as if he were standing on his head instead of his heels, would not in the least express his mental condition as he stood in his surgery that September afternoon and read a letter, just delivered, from his sister, Madame Cardiac.

"Wants me to go to Sainteville to see Ann Preen; thinks she will die if I refuse, for the French doctors can do nothing for her!" commented Featherston, staring at the letter in intense perplexity, and then looking off it to stare at me.

I wonder whether anything in this world happens by chance? In the days and years that have gone by since, I sometimes ask myself

whether *that* did : that I should be at that particular moment in Featherston's surgery. Squire Todhetley was staying with Sir John Whitney for partridge shooting. He had taken me with him, Tod being in Gloucestershire ; and on this Friday afternoon I had run in to say How-d'ye-do to Featherston.

"*Sainteville !*" repeated he, quite unable to collect his senses. "Why, I must cross the water to go *there !*"

I laughed. "Did you think Sainteville would cross to you, sir?"

"Bless me ! just listen to this," he went on, reading parts of the letter aloud for my benefit. "'It is a dreadful story, George ; I dare not enter into details here. But I may tell you this much : that she is dying of fright as much as of fever—or whatever it may be that ails her physically. I am sure it is not consumption, though some of the people here think it is. It is fright and superstition. She lives in the belief that the house is haunted : that Lavinia's ghost walks in it.'

"Now what on earth can Mary mean by that?" demanded the doctor, looking off to ask me. "Ann Preen's wits must have left her. And Mary's, too, to repeat so nonsensical a thing."

Turning to the next page of the letter, Featherston read on.

"'To see her dying by inches before my eyes, and not make any attempt to save her, is what I cannot reconcile myself to, George. I should have it on my conscience afterwards. I think there is this one chance for her : that you, who have attended her before and must know her constitution, would see her now. You might be able to suggest some remedy or mode of treatment which would restore her. It might even be that the sight of a home face, of her old home doctor, would do for her what the strange doctors here cannot. No one knows better than you how marvellously in illness the mind influences the body.'

"True enough," broke off Featherston. "But it seems to me there must be something mysterious about this sickness." He read on again.

"Stella, who is here, was the first to suggest your seeing her, but it was already exercising my thoughts. Do come, George ! the sooner the better. I and Jules will be delighted to have you with us."

Featherston slowly folded up the letter. "What do you think of all this, Johnny Ludlow ? Curious, is it not ?"

"Very. Especially that hint about the house being haunted by the dead-and-gone Miss Preen."

"I have never heard clearly what it was Lavinia Preen died of," observed Featherston, leaving, doctor-like, the supernatural for the practical. "Except that she was seized with some sort of illness one day and died the next."

"But that's no reason why her ghost should walk. Is it ?"

"Nancy's imagination," spoke Featherston slightly. "She was always foolish and fanciful."

"Shall you go to Sainteville, Mr. Featherston?"

He gave his head a slow, dubious shake, but did not speak.

"Don't I wish such a chance were offered to me!"

Featherston sat down on a high stool, which stood before the physic shelves, to revolve the momentous question. And by the time he took over it, he seemed to find it a difficult task.

"One hardly likes to refuse the request, put as Mary writes it," remarked he presently. "Yet I don't see how I can go all the way over there; or how I could leave my patients here. What a temper some of them would be in!"

"They wouldn't die of it. It would be a rare holiday for you. Set you up in strength for a year to come."

"I've not had a holiday since that time at Pumpwater," he rejoined dreamily; "when I went over for a day or two to see poor John Whitney. You remember it, Johnny; you were there."

"Ay, I remember it."

"Not that this is a question of a holiday for me or no holiday, and I wonder you should put it so, Johnny Ludlow; it turns upon Ann Preen. Ann Fennel, that's to say. If I thought I *could* do her any good, and those French doctors can't, why I suppose I ought to make an effort to go."

"To be sure. Make one also to take me with you!"

"I daresay!" laughed Featherston. "What would the Squire say to that?"

"Bluster a bit, and then see it was the very thing for me, and ask what the cost would be. Mr. Featherston, I shall be ready to start when you are. Please let me go!"

Of course I said this half in jest. But it turned out to be earnest. Whether Featherston feared he might get lost if he crossed the sea alone, I can't say; but he said I might put the question to the Squire if I liked, and he would see him later and second it.

Featherston did another thing. He carried Mary Cardiac's letter that evening to Selby Court. Colonel Selby was staying with his brother for a week's shooting. Mr. Selby, a nervous valetudinarian, would not have gone out with a gun if bribed to it, but he invited his friends to do so. They had just finished dinner when Featherston arrived; the two brothers, and a short, dark, younger man with a rather keen but good-natured face and kindly dark eyes. He was introduced as Mr. David Preen, and turned out to be a cousin, more or less removed, of all the Preens and all the Selbys you have ever heard of, dead or living.

Featherston imparted his news to them, and showed his sister's letter. It was pronounced to be a very curious letter, and was read over more than once. Colonel Selby next told them what he knew and what he thought of Edwin Fennel: how he had persistently schemed to get the quarterly money of the two ladies into his own covetous hands, and what a shady sort of individual he was believed

to be. Mr. Selby, nervous at the best of times, let alone the worst, became painfully impressed: he seemed to fear poor Nancy was altogether in a hornet's nest, and gave an impulsive opinion that some one of the family ought to go over with Featherston to look into things.

"Lavinia can't have been murdered, can she?" cried he, his thoughts altogether confused; "murdered by that man for her share of the money? Why else should her ghost come back?"

"Don't make us laugh, Paul," said the Colonel to his brother. "Ghosts are all moonshine. There are no such things."

"I can tell you that there *are*, William," returned the elder. "Though mercifully the power to see them is accorded to very few mortals on earth. Can you go with Mr. Featherston to look into this strange business, William?"

"No," replied the Colonel, "I could not possibly spare the time. Neither should I care to do it. Any inquiry of that kind would be quite out of my line."

"I will go," quietly spoke David Preen.

"Do so, David," said Mr. Selby eagerly. "It shall cost you nothing, you know." By which little speech, Featherston gathered that Mr. David Preen was not more overdone with riches than were many of the other Preens.

"Look into it well, David. See the doctor who attended Lavinia; see all and everybody able to throw any light upon her death," urged Mr. Selby. "As to Ann, she was lamentably, foolishly blameable to marry as she did, but she must not be left at the villain's mercy now things have come to this pass."

To which Mr. David Preen nodded an emphatic assent.

The Squire gave in at last. Not to my pleading—he accused me of having lost my head only to think of it—but to Featherston. And when the following week was wearing away, the exigencies of Featherston's patients not releasing him sooner, we started for Sainteville; he, I, and David Preen. Getting in at ten at night after a boisterous passage, Featherston took up his quarters at M. Cardiac's, we ours at the Hôtel des Princes.

She looked very ill. Ill and changed. I had seen Ann Preen at Buttermead when she lived there, but the Ann Preen (or Fennel) I saw now was not much like her. The once bright face was now drawn and fallen in, and very nearly as long and grey as Featherston's. Apart from that, a timid, shrinking look sat upon it, as though she feared some terror lay very near to her.

The sick have to be studied, especially when suffering from whims and fancies. So they invented a little fable to Mrs. Fennel—that Featherston and David Preen were taking an excursion together for their recreation, and the doctor had extended it as far as Sainteville to see his sister Mary; never allowing her to think that it was to see

her. I was with them, but I went for nobody—and in truth that's all I was in the matter.

It was the forenoon of the day after we arrived. David Preen had gone in first, her kinsman and distant cousin, to the petite Maison Rouge, paving the way, as it were, for Featherston. We went in presently. Mrs. Fennel sat in a large arm-chair by the salon fire, wrapped in a grey shawl; she was always cold now, she told us; David Preen sat on the sofa opposite, talking pleasantly of home news. Featherston joined him on the sofa, and I sat down near the table.

Oh, she was glad to see us! Glad to see us all. Ours were home faces, you see. She held my hands in hers, and the tears ran down her face, betraying her state of weakness.

"You have not been very well of late, Mary tells me," Featherston said to her in a break of the conversation. "What has been the matter?"

"I—it came on from a bad cold I caught," she answered in some hesitation. "And there was all the trouble about Lavinia's death. I could not get over the grief."

"Well, I must say you don't look very robust," returned Featherston, in a half-joking tone. "I think I had better take you in hand while I am here, and set you up."

"I do not think you can set me up; I do not suppose anyone can," she replied, shaking back her curls, which fell on each side her face in ringlets as of old.

Featherston smiled cheerily. "I'll try," said he. "Some of my patients say the same when I am first called in to them; but they change their tone after I have brought back their roses. So will you; never fear. I'll come in this afternoon and have a professional chat with you."

That settled, they went on with Buttermead again; David Preen giving scraps and revelations of the Preen and Selby families; Featherston telling choice items of the rural public in general. Mrs. Fennel's spirits went up to animation.

"Shall you be able to do anything for her, sir?" I asked the Doctor as we came away and went through the entry to the Place Ronde.

"I cannot tell," he answered gravely. "She has a look on her face that I do not like to see there."

Betrayed into confidence, I suppose, by the presence of the old friend of her girlhood, Ann Fennel related everything to Mr. Featherston that afternoon, as they sat on the sofa side by side, her hand occasionally held soothingly in his own. He assured her plainly that what she was chiefly suffering from was a disorder of the nerves, and that she must state to him explicitly the circumstances which had brought it on before he could decide how to treat her for it.

Nancy obeyed him. She yearned to get well, though a latent

impression lay within her that she should not do so. She told him the particulars of Lavinia's unexpected death just when on the point of leaving Sainteville; and she went on to declare, glancing over her shoulders with frightened eyes, that she (Lavinia) had several times since then appeared in the house.

"What did Lavinia die of?" inquired the Doctor at this juncture.

"We could not tell," answered Mrs. Fennel. "It puzzled us. At first M. Dupuis thought it must be inflammation brought on by a chill; but M. Podevin quite put that opinion aside, saying it was nothing of the sort. He is a younger and more energetic practitioner than M. Dupuis."

"Was it never suggested that she might, in one way or another, have taken something which poisoned her?"

"Why, yes, it was; I believe M. Dupuis did think so; I am sure M. Podevin did. But it was impossible it could have been the case, you see, because Lavinia touched nothing either of the days that we did not also partake of."

"There ought to have been an examination after death. You objected to that, I fancy," continued Featherston, who had talked a little with Madame Cardiac.

"True; I did; and I have been sorry for it since," sighed Ann Fennel. "It was through what my husband said to me that I objected: Edwin thought it would be distasteful to me. He did not like the idea of it either. Being dead, he held that she should be left in reverence."

Featherston coughed. She was evidently innocent as any lamb of suspicion against *him*.

"And now," went on Mr. Featherston, "just tell me what you mean by saying you see your sister about the house."

"We do see her," said Nancy.

"Nonsense! You don't. It is all fancy. When the nerves are unstrung, as yours are, they play us all sorts of tricks. Why, I knew a man once who took up a notion that he walked upon his head, and he came to me to be cured!"

"But it is the seeing Lavinia's apparition, and the constant fear of seeing it which lies upon me, that has brought on this nervousness," pleaded Nancy. "It is to my husband, when he is here, that she chiefly appears; nothing but that is keeping him away. I have seen her only three or four times."

She spoke quietly and simply, evidently grounded in the belief. Mr. Featherston wondered how he was to deal with this: and perhaps he was not, himself, so much of a sceptic in the supernatural as he thought fit to pretend. Nancy continued.

"It was to my husband she appeared first. Exactly a week after her death. No; a week after the evening she was first taken ill. He was coming upstairs to bed; I had gone on; when he suddenly fancied that someone was following

I were in the house. Turning quickly round, he saw Lavinia. That was the first time; and I assure you I thought he would have died of it. Never before had I witnessed such mortal terror in man."

"Did he tell you he had seen her?"

"No; never. I could not imagine what brought on these curious attacks of fright, for he had others. He put it upon his health. It was only when I saw Lavinia myself after he went to England that I knew. I knew then what it must have been."

Mr. Featherston was silent.

"She always appears in the same dress," continued Nancy; "a silver-grey silk that she wore at church that Sunday. It was the last gown she ever put on: we took it off her when she was first seized with the pain. And in her face there is always a sad, beseeching aspect, as if she wanted something and were imploring us to get it for her. *Indeed* we see her, Mr. Featherston."

"Ah, well," he said, perceiving it was not from this quarter that light could be thrown on the suspicious darkness of the past, "let us talk of yourself. You are to obey my orders in all respects, Mistress Nancy. We will soon have you flourishing again."

Brave words. Perhaps the doctor half believed in them himself. But he and they received a check all too soon.

That same evening, after David Preen had left: for he went in to spend an hour at the little red house to gossip about the folks at home: Nancy was taken with a fit of shivering. Flore hastily mixed her a glass of hot wine and water, and then went upstairs to light a fire in the bedroom, thinking her mistress would be the better for it. Nancy, who could hear Flore moving about overhead, suddenly remembered something that she wanted brought down. Rising from her chair, she went to the door of the salon intending to call out. A sort of side light, dim and indistinct, fell upon her as she stood in the recess at the foot of the stairs, from the lamp in the salon and from the stove in the kitchen, for both doors were open.

"Flore," she was beginning, "will you bring down my ——"

And there Ann Fennel's words ended. With a wild cry, which reached the ears of Flore and nearly startled her into fits, Mrs. Fennel collapsed. The servant came dashing downstairs, expecting to hear that the ghost had appeared again.

It was not that. Her mistress was looking wild and puzzled; and when she recovered herself sufficiently to speak, declared that she had been startled by some animal. Either a cat or a rabbit, she could not tell which, the glimpse she caught of it was so brief and slight; it had run against her legs as she was calling out.

Flore did not know what to make of this. She looked about, but neither cat nor rabbit was to be seen; and she told her mistress it could have been nothing but fancy. Mrs. Fennel thought she knew better.

"Why, I felt it and saw it," she said. "It came right against me and ran over my feet. It seemed to be making for the passage, as if it wanted to get out by the front door."

We were gathered together in the salon of the petite Maison Rouge the following morning, partly by accident. Ann Fennel, exceedingly weak and nervous, lay in bed. Featherston and M. Dupuis were both upstairs. She put down her illness to the fright, which she talked of to them freely. They did not assure her it was only "nerves"—to what purpose? I waited in the salon with David Preen, and just as the doctors came down Madame Cardiac came in.

David Preen seized upon the opportunity. Fearing that one so favourable might not again occur, unless formally planned, he opened the ball. Drawing his chair to the table, next to that of Madame Cardiac, the two doctors sitting opposite, David Preen avowed, with straightforward candour, that he, with some other relatives, held a sort of doubt as to whether it might not have been something Miss Lavinia Preen took which caused her death; and he begged M. Dupuis to say if any such doubt had crossed his own mind at the time.

The fair-faced little *médecin* shook his head at this appeal, as much as to say he thought that the subject was a puzzling one. Naturally the doubt had crossed him, and very strongly, he answered; but the difficulty in assuming that view of the matter lay in her having partaken solely of the food which the rest of the household had partaken of; that and nothing else. His confrère, M. Podevin, held a very conclusive opinion—that she had died of poison.

David Preen drew towards him a writing-case which lay on the table, took a sheet of paper from it, and a pencil from his pocket. "Let us go over the facts quietly," said he; "it may be we shall arrive at some decision."

So they went over the facts, the chief speakers being Madame Cardiac and Flore, who was called in. David Preen dotted down from time to time something which I suppose particularly impressed him.

Miss Preen was in perfectly good health up to that Sunday—the first after Easter. On the following Tuesday she was about to quit Sainteville for Boulogne, her home at the petite Maison Rouge having become intolerable to her through the residence in it of Captain Fennel.

"Pardon me if I state here something which is not positively in the line of facts; rather, perhaps, in that of imagination," said Madame Cardiac, looking up. "Lavinia had gradually acquired a most painful dread of Captain Fennel. She had dreams which she could only believe came to warn her against him, in which he appeared to be threatening her with some evil that she could not escape from. Once or twice—and this I cannot in any way account

for—she saw him in the house when he was not in it, not even at Sainteville ——”

“What! saw his apparition?” cried Featherston. “When the man was living! Come, come, Mary, that is going too far!”

“Quelle drôle d'idée!” exclaimed the little doctor.

“He appeared to her twice, she told me,” continued Mary Cardiac. “She had been spending the evening out each time, had come into the house, this house, closing the street-door behind her. When she lighted a candle at the slab, she saw him standing just inside the door, gazing at her with the same dreadful aspect that she saw afterwards in her dreams. You may laugh, George; M. Dupuis, I think you are already laughing; but I fully believe that she saw what she said she did, and dreamt what she did dream.”

“But it could not have been the man's apparition when he was not dead; and it could not have been the man himself when he was not at Sainteville,” contended Featherston.

“And I believe that it all meant one of those mysterious warnings which are vouchsafed us from our spiritual guardians in the unseen world,” added Madame Cardiac, independently pursuing her argument. “And that it came to Lavinia to warn her to escape from this evil house.”

“And she did not do it,” remarked David Preen. “She was not quick enough. Well, let us go on.”

“As Lavinia came out of church, Charles Palliser ran after her to ask her to go home to dine with him and his aunt,” resumed Madame Cardiac. “If she had only accepted it! The dinner here was a very simple one, and they all partook of it, including Flore ——”

“And it was Flore who cooked and served it?” interrupted David Preen, looking at her.

“Mais oui, monsieur. The tart excepted; that was frangipane, and did come from the pastrycook,” added Flore, plunging into English. “Then I had my own dinner, and I had of every dish; and I drank of the wine. Miss Lavinia would give me a glass of wine on the Sunday, and she poured it out for me herself that day from the bottle of Bordeaux on their own table. Nothing was the matter with any of all that. The one thing I did not have of was the liqueur.”

“What liqueur was that?”

“It was chartreuse, I believe,” said Flore. “While I was busy removing the dinner articles from the salon, monsieur was busy at his cupboard outside there, where he kept his bottles. He came into the kitchen just as I had sat down to eat, and asked me for three liqueur glasses, which I gave to him on a plate. I heard him pour the liqueur into them, and he carried them to the ladies.”

Mr. David Preen wrote something down here.

“After that the Captain went out to walk, saying he would see the English boat enter; and when I had finished washing up I carried

the tea-tray to the salon table and went home. Miss Lavinia was quite well then ; she sat in her belle robe of grey silk talking with her sister. Then, when I was giving my boy, Dion, his collation, a tartine and a cooked apple, I was fetched back here, and found the poor lady fighting with pain for her life."

"Did you wash those liqueur glasses?" asked Mr. Featherston.

"But yes, sir. I had taken them away when I carried in the tea-things, and washed them at once, and put them on the shelf in their places."

"You see," observed M. Dupuis, "the ill-fated lady appears to have taken nothing that the others did not take also. I applied my remedies when I was called to her, and the following day she had, as I believed, recovered from the attack ; nothing but the exhaustion left by the agony was remaining. But that night she was again seized, and I was again fetched to her. The attack was even more violent than the first one. I made a request for another doctor, and M. Podevin was brought. He at once set aside my suggestion of inflammation from a chill, and said it looked to him more like a case of poison."

"She had had nothing but slops that day, messieurs, which I made and carried to her," put in Flore ; "and when I left, at night, she was, as M. le Médecin puts it, 'all well to look at.'"

"Flore did not make the arrowroot which she took later," said Mary Cardiac, taking up the narrative. "When Lavinia went up to bed, towards nine o'clock, Mrs. Fennel made her a cup of arrowroot in the kitchen——"

"And a cup for herself at the same time, as I was informed madame," spoke the little doctor.

"Oh, yes, I know that, M. Dupuis. Mrs. Fennel brought her sister's arrowroot, when it was ready, into this room, asking her husband whether she might venture to put a little brandy into it. He sent her to ask the question of Lavinia, bidding her leave the arrowroot on the table here. She came down for it, saying Lavinia declined the brandy, carried it up to her and saw her take it. Mrs. Fennel wished her good-night and came down for her own portion, which she had left in the kitchen. Before eleven o'clock, when they were going to bed, cries were heard in Lavinia's room ; she was seized with the second attack, and—and died in it."

"This second attack was so violent, so unmanageable," said M. Dupuis, as Mary Cardiac's voice faltered into silence, "that I feel convinced I could not have saved her had I been present when it came on. I hear that Captain Fennel says he rang several times at my door before he could arouse me. Such was not the case. I am a very light sleeper, waking, from habit, at the slightest sound. But in this case I had not had time to fall asleep, when I fancied I heard the bell sound very faintly. I thought I must be mistaken, as the bell is a loud bell, and rings easily ; and people who ring me up

at night generally ring pretty sharply. I lay listening, and some time afterwards, not immediately, it did ring. I opened my window, saw Captain Fennel outside, and was dressed and with him in two minutes."

"That sounds as if he did not want you to go to her too quickly, monsieur," observed Mr. Featherston, which went, as the French have it, without saying. "And I have heard of another suspicious fact: that he put his wife up to stop the medical examination after death."

"It amounts to this," spoke David Preen, "according to our judgment, if anything wrong was administered to her, it was given in the glass of liqueur on the Sunday afternoon, and in the cup of arrowroot on the Monday evening. They were the only things affording an opportunity of being tampered with; and in each case the pain came on about two hours afterwards."

Grave suspicion, as I am sure they all felt it to be. But not enough, as Featherston remarked, to accuse a man of murder. There was no proof to be brought forward, especially now that months had elapsed.

"What became of the cup which had contained the arrowroot?" inquired David Preen, looking at Flore. "Was it left in the bedroom?"

"That cup, sir, I found in a bowl of water in the kitchen, and also the other one which had been used. The two were together in the wooden bowl. I supposed Madame Fennel had put them there; but she said she had not."

"Ah!" exclaimed David Preen, drawing a deep breath.

He had come over to look into this suspicious matter; but, as it seemed, nothing could be done. To stir in it, and fail, would be worse than letting it alone.

"Look you," said David Preen, as he put up his note-book. "If it be true that Lavinia cannot rest now she's dead, but shows herself here in the house, I regard it as a pretty sure proof that she was sent out of the world unjustly. But——"

"Then you hold the belief that spirits revisit the earth, monsieur," interrupted M. Dupuis; "and that revenants are to be seen?"

"I do, sir," replied David. "We Preens see them. But I cannot stir in this matter, I was about to say, and the man must be left to his conscience."

And so the conference broke up.

The thing which lay chiefly on hand now was to try to bring health back to Ann Fennel. It was thought well to take her out of the house for a short time, as she had such fancies about it; so Featherston gave up his room at Madame Cardiac's, and Ann was invited to move into it, whilst he joined us at the hotel. I thought her very ill, as we all did. But after her removal there, she recovered her spirits

wonderfully, and went out for short walks and laughed and chatted; and when Featherston and David Preen took the boat back to return home, she went to the port to see them steam off.

"Will it be all right with her?" was the last question Mary Cardiac whispered to her brother.

"I'm afraid *not*," he answered. "A little time will show, one way or the other. Depends somewhat, perhaps, upon how that husband of hers allows things to go on. I have done what I can, Mary; I could not do more."

Does the reader notice that I did not include myself in those who steamed off? For I did not go. Good, genial little Jules Cardiac, who was pleased to say he had always liked me much at school, invited me to make a stay at his house, if I did not mind putting up with a small bedroom in the mansarde. I did not mind it at all; it was large enough for me. Nancy was delighted. We had quite a gay time of it; and I made the acquaintance of Major and Mrs. Smith, the Misses Bosanquet and Charley Palliser, who was shortly to quit Sainteville. Charley's impression of Mrs. Fennel was that she would quit it before he did, but in a different manner.

One fine afternoon, when we were coming off the pier, Nancy walking between me and Mary Cardiac, for she needed the support of two arms if she went far—yes, she was as weak as that—someone called out that the London boat was coming in. Turning round, we saw her gliding smoothly up the harbour. No one in these Anglo-French towns willingly misses *that* sight, and we drew up on the quay to watch the passengers land. There were only eight or ten of them.

Suddenly Nancy gave a great cry, which bore a sound both of fear and of gladness—"Oh, there's Edwin!"—and the next moment began to shake her pocket-handkerchief frantically.

A thin, grey weasel of a man, whose face I did not like, came stalking up the ladder. Yes, it was the ex-captain, Edwin Fennel.

"He has not come for her sake; he has come to grab the quarter's money," spoke Mary, quite savagely, in my ear. No doubt. It would be due the end of September, which was quite at hand.

The Captain was elaborately polite; quite effusive in his greeting to us. Nancy left us and took his arm. At the turning where we had to branch off to the Rue de la Pomme Cuite, she halted to say good-bye.

"But you are coming back to us, are you not?" cried Madame Cardiac to her.

"Oh, I could not let Edwin go home alone," said she. "Nobody's there but Flore, you know."

So she went back there and then to the petite Maison Rouge, and never came out of it again. I think he was kind to her, that man. He had sometimes a scared look upon his face, and I guessed he had been seeing sights. The man would have given his head

to be off again ; to remain in that haunted house must have been to him a most intolerable penance ; but he had some regard (policy dictating it) for public opinion, and could not well run away from his wife in her failing health.

It was curious how quickly Nancy declined. From the very afternoon she entered the house it seemed to begin. He had grabbed the money, as Mary Cardiac called it, and brought her nice and nourishing things ; but nothing availed. And a fine way he must have been in, to see that ; for with his wife's death the money would go away from him for evermore.

M. Dupuis, sometimes M. Henry Dupuis, saw her daily ; and Captain Fennel hastily called in another doctor who had the reputation of being the best in the town, next to M. Podevin ; one M. Lamirand. Mary Cardiac spent half her time there ; I went in most days. It could not be said that she had any special complaint, but she was too weak to live.

In less than three weeks it was all over. The end when it came was quite sudden. For a day or two she had seemed so much better that we told her she had taken a turn at last. On the Thursday evening, quite late, it was between eight and nine o'clock, Madame Cardiac asked me to run there with some jelly which she had made, and which was only then ready. When I arrived, Flore said she was sure her mistress would like me to go up to her room ; she was alone, monsieur having stepped out.

Nancy, wrapped in a warm dressing-gown, sat by the fire in an easy-chair and a great shawl. Her fair curls were all put back under a small lace cap, which was tied at the chin with grey ribbon ; her pretty blue eyes were bright. I told her what I had come for, and took the chair in front of her.

"You look so well this evening, Nancy," I said heartily—for I had learnt to call her so at Madame Cardiac's, as they did. "We shall have you getting well now all one way."

"It is the spurt of the candle before going out," she quietly answered. "I have not the least pain left anywhere—but it is only that."

"You should not say or think so."

"But I know it ; I cannot mistake my own feelings. Fancy anyone, reduced as I am, getting well again !"

I am a bad one to keep up "make-believes." Truth to say, I felt as sure of it as she did.

"And it will not be very long first. Johnny," she went on, in a half-whisper, "I saw Lavinia to-day."

I looked at her, but made no reply.

"I have never seen her since I came back here. Edwin has, though ; I am sure of it. This afternoon at dusk I woke up out of a doze, for getting up to sit here quite exhausts me, and I was moving forward to touch the hand-bell on the table there, to let

Flore know I was ready for my tea, when I saw Lavinia. She was standing over there, just in the firelight. I thought she seemed to be holding out her hand to me, as if inviting me to go to her, and on her face there was the sweetest smile of welcome; sweeter than could be seen on any face in life. All the sad, mournful, beseeching look had left it. She stood there for about a minute, and then vanished."

"Were you very much frightened?"

"I had not a thought of fear, Johnny. It was the contrary. She looked radiantly happy; and it somehow imparted happiness to me. I think—I think," added Nancy impressively, though with some hesitation, "that she came to let me know I am going to her. I believe I have seen her for the last time. The house has, also, I fancy; she and I will shortly go out of it together."

What could I answer to that?

"And so it is at last over," she murmured, more to herself than to me. "Very nearly over. The distress and the doubt, the terror and the pain. I brought it all on; you know that, Johnny Ludlow. I feel sure now that she has pardoned me. I humbly hope that God has."

She caught up her breath with a long drawn sigh.

"And you will give my dear love to all the old friends in England, Johnny, beginning with Mr. Featherston; he has been very kind to me; you will see them again, but I shall not. Not in this life. But we shall be together in the Life which has no ending."

At twelve o'clock that night Nancy Fennel died. At least, it was as near twelve as could be told. Just after that hour Flore went into the room, preparatory to sitting up with her, and found her dead—just expired, apparently—with a sweet smile on her face, and one hand stretched out as if in greeting. Perhaps Lavinia had come to greet her.

We followed her to the grave on Saturday. Captain Fennel walked next the coffin—and I wondered how he liked it. I was close behind him with M. Cardiac. Charley Palliser came next with little Monsieur le Docteur Dupuis and M. Gustave Sauvage. And we left Nancy in the cemetery side by side with her sister.

Captain Edwin Fennel disappeared. On the Sunday, when we English were looking for him in church, he did not come—his grief not allowing him, said some of the ladies. But an English clerk in the broker's office, hearing this, told another tale. Fennel had gone off by the boat which left the port for London the previous night at midnight.

And he did not come back again. He had left sundry debts behind him, including that owing to Madame Veuve Sauvage. M. Cardiac, later, undertook the payment of these at the request of Colonel Selby. It was understood that Captain Edwin Fennel had

emigrated to South America. If he had any conscience at all, it was to be hoped he carried it with him. He did not carry the money. The poor little income which he had schemed for, and perhaps worse, went back to the Selbys.

And that is the story. It is a curious history, and painful in more ways than one. But I repeat that it is true.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



TO ONE DEAD.

WHEN you were tired and went away,
I said, amid my new heart-ache,
"When I catch breath from pain, some day,
I will teach grief a worthier way,
And make a great song for his sake!"

Yet there is silence. O my friend,
You gave me love such years ago—
A child who could not comprehend
Its worth, yet kept it to the end—
How can I sing when you lie low?

Not always silence. O my dear,
Not when the empty heart and hand
Reach out for you, who are not near.
If you could see, if you could hear,
I think that you would understand.

The grief that can get leave to run
In channels smooth of tender song,
Wins solace mine has never won.
I have left all my work undone,
And only dragged my grief along.

Many who loved you many years
(Not more than I shall always do),
Will breathe their songs in your dead ears;
God help them if they weep such tears
As I—who have no song for you.

You would forgive me, if you knew!
Silence is all I have to bring;
Where tears are many words are few;
I have but tears to bring to you;
For since you died I cannot sing!

E. NESBIT.

"ECCO ROMA!"

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.



THE FORUM.

IT has been said that the outward form is the index to the inner man. If we are to believe Lavater, this is, to a great extent, true. We mould our own characters, just as we choose our own friends. An habitual living of the higher life will bring forth the higher type. The tendency is progressive in this as in all other things, if we allow nature her free and healthy course. There is the other side of the picture, of course, and the downward way, with the inevitable result. So, with the evidence of our senses and experience, we need

not go to the great physiognomist for the simple results of cause and effect. When, in obedience to the Divine law, "a life for a life," a criminal forfeits his existence, he generally possesses sufficient physical evidence of the wisdom of the decree. On the other hand, we can only associate beauty of form with gracefulness of spirit. This also is so far true that where we see beauty and repose in old age, we may write it down as a certainty that the previous life has been pure, lovely, and of good report. So comparative physiognomy is one of the most interesting of studies, and perhaps, one of the saddest; more instructive than the finest sermon that ever was written.

This fine prelude has been inspired by the feeling that nature herself seems to bear out this fact in her physical geography. The most romantic countries have had the most thrilling of histories. Italy, with her beautiful sea coast, her exquisite hills and valleys, her luxuriant plains watered by silver streams, also possesses the most romantic of records. The history of Rome or of Venice would alone immortalise Italy for all time, and throw around her that halo of

distinction which raises all who possess it above the ordinary level of mankind.

Nothing can be more beautiful and diversified than Italy. As you wander under those sunny skies from north to south, you feel, day by day and moment by moment, that you are in an earthly paradise. Every feature, from the magnificent and sublime to the calm and gentle, may be found here. Her mountain ways are grand beyond description. They who have gone down through the Alps to the plains of Lombardy, can never forget the emotions awakened by these glorious passes. At sunset the hills are flushed with crimson; the skies are ablaze with gorgeous colouring; the sun sinks to rest in a canopy of gold. The mountains recede, and darkness falls upon these rich plains of Lombardy; the flush of sunset quickly fades and leaves you nothing but gigantic outlines. But in a few hours the sun rises again, and all the vision is repeated.

Again, in the valley of the *Dora Baltea*, you have all the wealth of colouring which belongs specially to Italy, combined with all the grandeur of Switzerland, all the romance of the Tyrol. You have also all the beauty and richness of lake scenery. In the Lower valley of the *Po* you see the most amazing luxuriance of vegetation, and this again is repeated in the valley of the *Arno*.

If you go to the sea coast, its beauty is unrivalled. The rich colouring of the Maritime Alps, the warm red sandstone contrasted with the green and grey of the abundant vegetation, blending so wonderfully with the matchless blue of the sky, form a picture which dazzles the imagination and bewilders the senses, and mocks all powers of description.

Never can I forget the first time that I saw the sea coast lying between Nice and Genoa. It remained then, it has remained ever since, as a vision. The express train hurried onwards so swiftly that the scene seemed to change as the pictures in a phantasmagoria. The coast was so diversified in outline, so broken and rugged—point after point, bay after bay approaching and receding, that everything appeared and disappeared with breathless rapidity.

When all was over, I seemed to have passed spiritually rather than materially through visions that belonged to a higher region than ours. The effect was not all delight. So rapid had been the experience, so vanishing the scenes, that the mind was left with the vague, confused feeling one has on awakening from a half-remembered dream.

And here, in writing of Rome, we find our contrast. The Eternal City possesses no sublime scenery to awaken its emotions within you. The surrounding Campagna is amongst the least fertile, least beautiful of all the Italian plains. To render it attractive, its river needs the pomp of pageantry, for which it was once so famous; its low levels need the excitement of conquering armies marching onward with shields and helmets gleaming in the sunshine. And so seen by the help of imagination, it will still remain interesting and absorbing



TEMPLE OF VESTA.



CAPITOLINE HILL.

above all other plains and rivers to the end of time. The seven hills of Rome will ever retain the charm they owe to the past: greatest of all charms, because saddest and most pathetic. The distant Apennines on the one hand, the beautiful Alban hills on the other, will never lose the interest that is theirs by virtue of their having looked down upon all the scenes of Rome's ancient grandeur. These hills and valleys echo and re-echo the word *Ichabod*! *Ichabod*! Its glory has departed; its sun has set; but the afterglow is miraculous, for it will never fade.

Whence first came these Romans?

Their origin is doubtful; but like much else that is great, they appear to have sprung from the East. Yet there is no absolute certainty about this. Like the origin and history of the Etruscans, much remains shrouded in mystery. There is internal evidence that the Romans sprang from a Sabine tribe, until, in the course of time, the Sabine language and characteristics died out, and Rome, becoming merged in her own absolute individuality, rose up a law unto herself; a distinct and mighty nation.

We are all familiar with its earliest traditions. The story of Romulus and Remus we almost learned with our cradle songs. How they sprang from a Vestal Virgin, the niece of Amulius; how she was buried alive, and they were thrown into the Tiber. How the Tiber had overflowed its banks, and, the waters receding, the twins were left upon dry ground. We know the story of the wolf that suckled them and the woodpecker that fed them; that, thus miraculously preserved, they were found by Faustulus, and taken home to his wife, Acca Laurentia. Here they were called Romulus and Remus, and grew up in the herdsman's cottage.

In time there came contention between the herdsmen of the Palatine Hill and those of the Aventine. Remus was taken prisoner, and Romulus went up to ransom him. Their fine forms betrayed their origin. Amulius was still king of Alba, but he had usurped the throne, for his brother Numitor was the rightful king. Romulus and Remus now attacked and slew Amulius, and Numitor succeeded to the throne of Alba.

The brothers now left Alba, and founded a new town on the banks of the Tiber. Upon this subject they disagreed. One wished to build upon the Palatine hill, the other upon the Aventine. In a last quarrel, Remus was accidentally slain, and one would think that remorse would haunt Romulus for ever after. But a more comfortable legend says that Romulus and Remus merely separated, and each built his own city. Romulus founding Rome on the Palatine, and Remus Remuria, on a hill three miles away. One prefers this legend—the hope that two brothers so closely allied, so miraculously preserved, so fine in form, and so noble in spirit, should remain firm friends and companions to the end of their lives.

So Romulus built his city on the Palatine hill 753 years before the

birth of Christ. To people it he made it a City of Refuge. All who had shed blood, or had otherwise committed evil, were safe here from pursuit. Runaway slaves received their freedom. This was hardly the way to obtain a noble population, but no doubt, under such conditions, it increased rapidly. The difficulty to be solved was, how to obtain wives for this army of bachelors; for those who had wives had left them behind them, and those who had none, would of course desire to take their chance in the great lottery of life. It was a City of Refuge for men, not for women. The latter were not supposed to need a refuge; they neither committed murder, nor otherwise made themselves notorious.

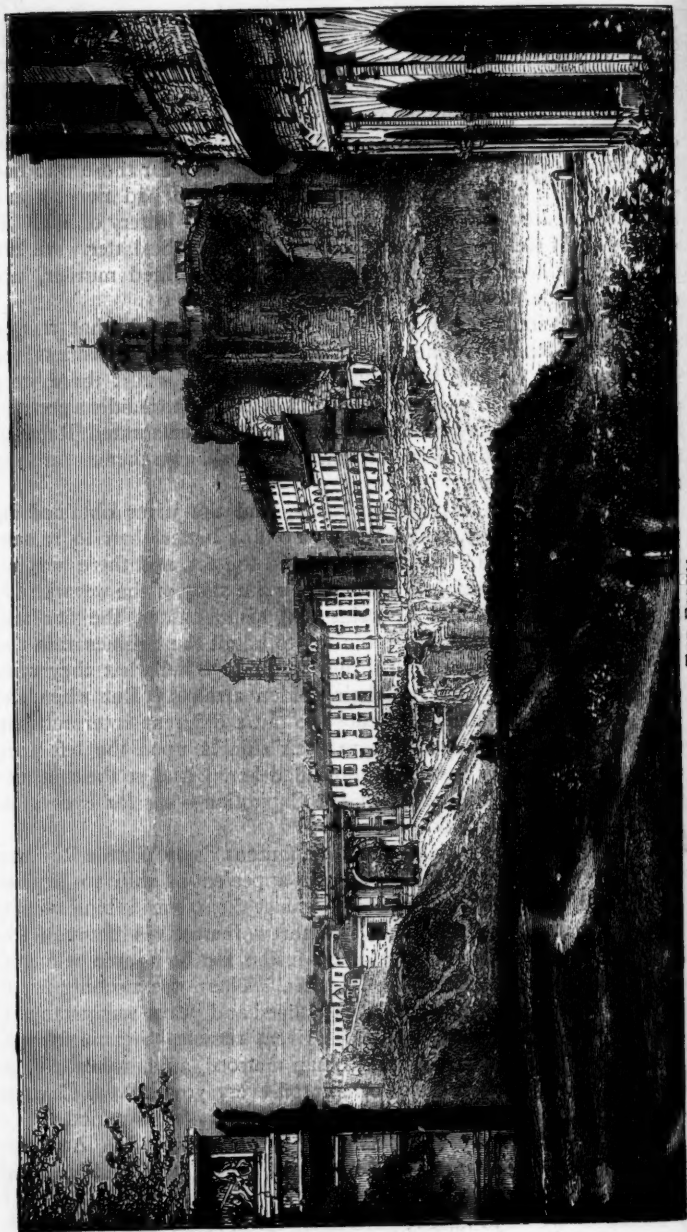
No one wanted these ex-criminals for husbands, and what was to be done? Romulus one day invited the Sabines to witness the games about to be held in honour of Consus, and whilst these were going on the Roman youths rushed in, seized all the maidens present, and carried them away by force. This was the celebrated Rape of the Sabines, which has since furnished the world with themes for song and scenes for canvas.

The Romans made good husbands, and the wives obtained by force were very happy, and asked for nothing better than to remain of their own free will. But wars followed the act, and there was no peace between the nations. We all know the story of the war with the Sabines: of the faithful Tarpeius and his daughter, the fair and faithless Tarpeia. How she promised to admit the Sabines into the citadel on the Saturnian Hill, if they would give her what they wore on their left arms—meaning their golden armlets. But when she opened the gates, the soldiers chose to put a different interpretation upon her demand; they also wore their shields upon the left arm, and these they threw upon her and killed her. And so the southern portion of the hill—since called the Capitoline—was for ever after called the Tarpeian Rock.

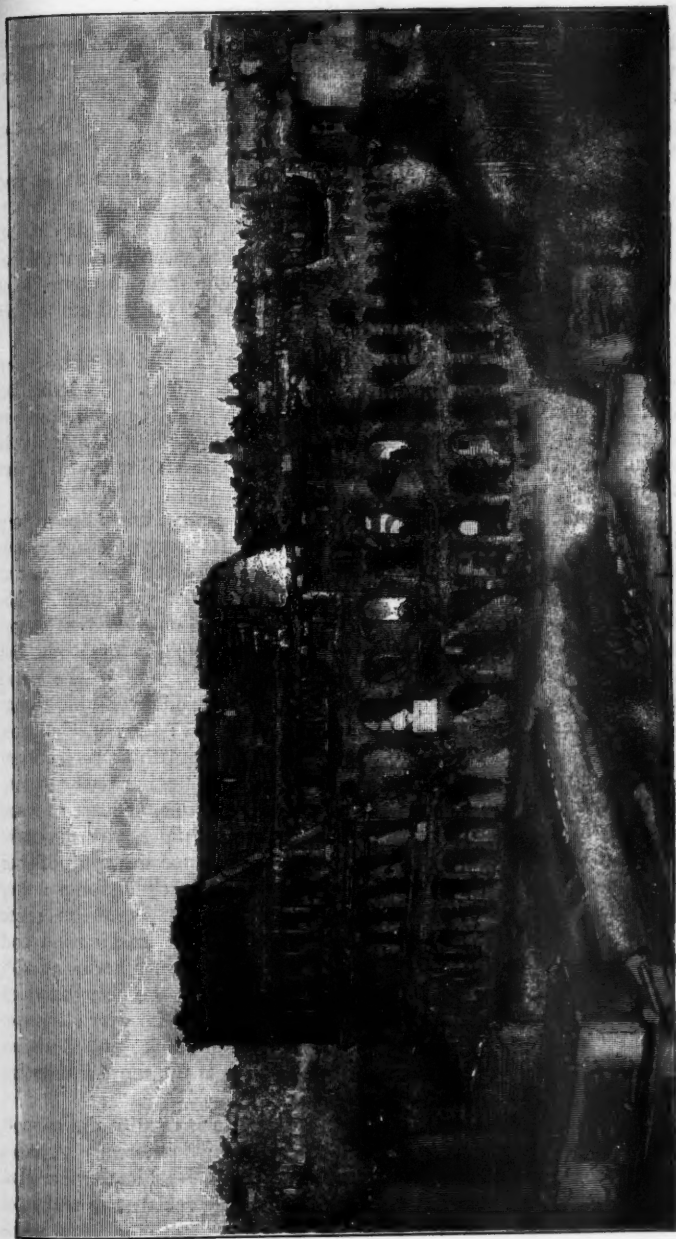
And still the wars raged. And one famous day when the Romans were sore pressed, and Romulus had appealed in vain to Jupiter Stator, and the battle seemed going against them, the Sabine women rushed down from the Palatine and threw themselves between the two armies. This naturally created confusion, for the women belonged equally to the Sabines and the Romans. There was nothing for it but to order a truce. The battle was stayed and peace was arranged, old feuds were forgotten, injuries forgiven, enemies became friends. In memory of the brave Sabine-Roman matrons, a festival called the Matronalia was instituted and celebrated every year on the Calends of March—the New Year's Day of the Romans of that period.

Time went on and brought its changes and vicissitudes. Amongst them Titus Tatius, the Sabine king, was killed at Lavinium, and Romulus succeeded him.

Romulus is said to have reigned thirty-seven years, and on the whole to have been a very good king "according to his lights:" the times



THE FORUM.



THE COLISEUM.

he lived in, the difficulties he had to encounter, the courage with which he fought in battle, the success which generally attended him, and the wisdom with which he ruled.

The manner of his death is as mysterious and mythological as the story of his birth and breeding.

When reviewing his army on the Field of Mars, a storm arose, and the darkness was so great that the soldiers could not see each other. During the darkness Romulus was carried off by Mars in his chariot. He appeared subsequently to a soldier who was returning from Alba, and declared that he and Mars would henceforth become joint guardians of Rome, and that he was to be worshipped under his Sabine name of Quirinus.

Another legend less miraculously ascribes his end to murder by the Sabine nobles during the darkness of the storm. So Romulus died, or disappeared in a chariot, and after a time Numa Pompilius reigned in his stead. And thus the kingdom, which was afterwards to subdue all Italy and become mistress of the civilised world, was founded.

To appreciate Rome as she now stands, one must know her history intimately. One ought to be familiar with the story of every monument and ruin before seeing the thing itself. In this light, a visit to Rome will be one of the most interesting events of your life. Without this knowledge, on the contrary, you will be convicted of ignorance at every step; the very romance and atmosphere of Rome will dissolve and evaporate. You will be chasing a will o' the wisp; seeking after sensations and emotions which will ever elude your grasp, and end in a certain humiliation and defeat: the consciousness that there is a world, a history, an atmosphere breathing around you from which you are shut out, in which you have neither part nor lot.

Fortunately it is in everyone's power to avoid this, at least to some extent. Without wading through ponderous volumes, you may take up short histories in which you will find the essence and spirit of your subject. There are many books which are not merely histories: they are romances, of which Rome and the Romans have been made the theme: so captivating that they enchain the imagination and accomplish all that is necessary to bring the mind into harmony with the Eternal City, her surroundings, her atmosphere, the very life which still actually seems to breathe in her very ruins, the very stones of her Sacred Way. There are two Romes: Pagan Rome and Christian Rome; and it would be difficult to say which is the more interesting and the more absorbing.

Mauleverer was of those whose practical minds require the support and reality of facts to arouse them to unusual interest. A mere romance, however thrilling, however beautiful, was lost upon him. His imagination was not sufficiently vivid to appreciate the realms of fiction; and after a perfect prose idyl, expecting to see a gleam in the eye and a flush on the cheek, one has been horrified and "thrown

back upon oneself" by the remark, laughingly and lightly made, it is true: "It is only a story after all."

But history was his delight, his world of romance. Its martial deeds would awaken him to enthusiasm, its grander records he would call sublime. His glance would kindle at the smallest act of heroism; whilst, on the other hand, the splendid description of a Waverley going to execution, told with all the force of Scott's graphic power, would fail to move him in the slightest degree.

The History of Rome was, fortunately, one of his pet subjects. It was a perfect delight to move about the streets, gaze upon the ruins, stand upon one of the seven hills, overlook the Campagna, watch the flowing Tiber, or tread the Appian Way, with one who knew the very stones of the place, the history of every broken pillar, the date and origin of every monument, every vicissitude through which it had passed. He seemed to bring back life from the dead and clothe the ruins with all their ancient glory. Hearing him speak, you once more saw the sacred fire burning in the Temple of Vesta; heard the shouts of the spectators watching the bull fights in the arena; saw Cæsar, laurel-crowned, making a triumphant progress in his chariot; heard the closing doors of the Temple of Janus in token that all the world was at peace. In all this he could be rapid, eloquent, and to the point, fired with enthusiasm, untiring in his walks, fervent in his moods. Even our little guide, Rossi, quaintly remarked, with a half comical, half regretful expression: "I am not wanted here. Sir Mauleverer knows Rome better than I do. I had better bid you good-day and retire. Othello's occupation is gone."

Not that we needed a guide. We both knew as much about Rome as Rossi could tell us, and probably more, as he had said. But if we knew as much or more about Ancient Rome, he, en revanche, was better acquainted with the modern city and could initiate us into all its mysteries, if mysteries there were.

For Rome, like a great public school, has its modern and its classical side. Rossi knew all the best shops; exactly where to go for everything; all the new twists and turnings; all the short cuts between one spot and another. He was acquainted with the best restaurants; and once, being athirst, he conducted us to a garden, where green bowers were cunningly arranged, and a temple in a corner was devoted to Terpsichore and Apollo. It was very modern, very French, very bearable at midday; but would be very unlike Rome when night fell, and the gas flared, and the tables were crowded, and noise and laughter went round, and the light-footed goddess was being serenaded.

"Can you fancy yourself in Rome?" cried Mauleverer, looking around upon what might have been the arena of a French café-chantant. "Let us come here to-night," he went on, with malice intent. "Let us come, that we may have our teeth set on edge; that we may see how the mighty are fallen; that the blue skies of

Rome, her moonlit nights, her refined and eternal ruins, the great heritage of her past, are absolutely lost upon her people. A prophet has no honour in his own country. It is the old story of familiarity breeding contempt. If angels came down to raise men heavenwards, they would not do it. Custom stales the most infinite variety."

As he spoke, a group of Frenchwomen crossed the garden, loud and laughing, mounted the platform, and began rehearsing for the night's performance. It was the usual thing; an exhibition that may be heard any night in Paris many times multiplied. Shrill voices and doubtful themes. Mauleverer wanted to depart at once; but, to punish him for his heresy, I made him endure the infliction until he declared himself saddened and vanquished. Yet he was right after all. Scarcely any influence is lasting upon the human mind. What it sees every day it ceases to appreciate. The utmost beauty of form and feature, the charm of a graceful spirit, a gracious presence, even these must be occasionally withdrawn, or they will lose their power.

"Shall we return to-night, Mauleverer?" I asked, as we left the garden.

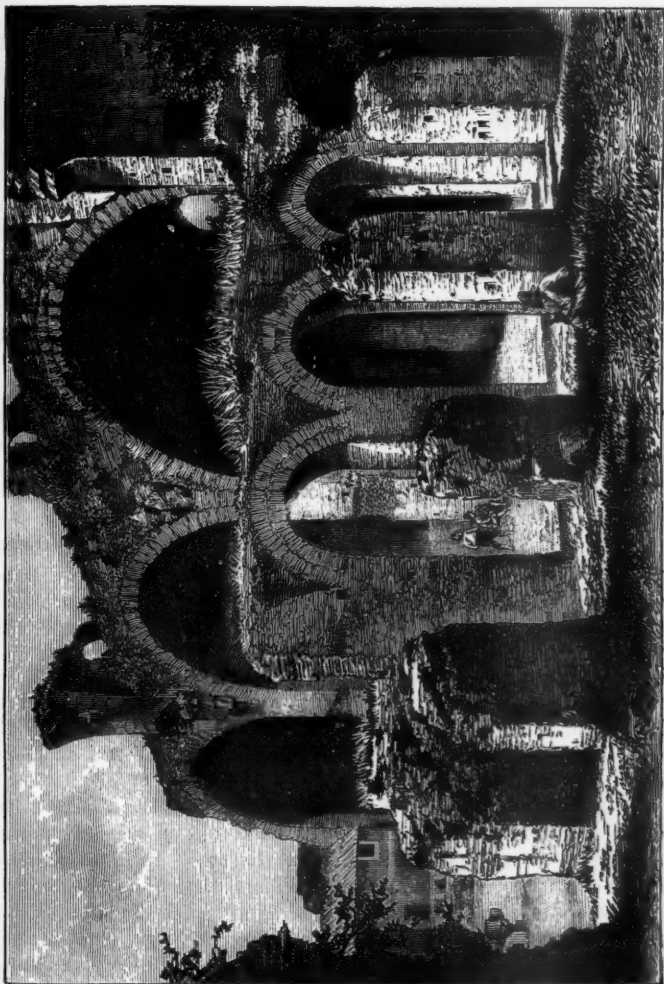
"Et tu, Brute!" he cried, as he had cried not long ago; and he linked his arm in mine as though he would drag me from temptation. "Let us to the Forum; tread the sacred way; lose ourselves in visions of the past. Let us contemplate the spot where the Vestal Virgins watched and ministered to the sacred light, and in their beauty and purity forget the wickedness of the present world."

We were not far from the Coliseum, and soon found ourselves once more standing within its walls; once more amazed, and for evermore amazed at the power which had raised so mighty a building. There is nothing like it in the world. It impresses you far more than the size and magnificence of St. Peter's. As you stand you imagine the building clothed in beauty and perfection. It is no longer a ruin. You see it crowded with a countless sea of faces—eager, cruel, intent. You hear the approach of the Emperor; he mounts his private staircase, and the conqueror of the world advances to the place set apart for him. The cheering of a multitude rises heavenward with a great shout, as if it would rend the very skies. It subsides, and in the silence which ensues you fancy you hear the roaring of wild beasts impatient for their prey. As St. Paul's words occur to you, "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus," you never before seemed to realise their full force or the horrors of the situation.

Then you imagine the doors of the arena thrown open. The beasts issue forth in turn; the combatants stand quivering with nervous courage, prepared for the unequal encounter, braced for victory or death. There must be a terrible element of cruelty in mankind. He was made in the image of the Heavenly, but where, we ask, is it now?

The Coliseum has been the scene of frightful cruelties, and Christian martyrs unnumbered have yielded up their life in the arena.

Here St. Ignatius was brought by Trajan from Antioch, and was devoured of wild beasts: the first of a long line of martyrs. The record is endless. Soon after the death of Ignatius over one



RUIN OF BASILICA OF CONSTANTINE.

hundred Christians were shot down with arrows. The tortures and torments to which all these martyrs were subjected will not bear recording.

The building was begun under Vespasian, in the year 72. It is said to have employed 12,000 captive Jews, and to have cost, in the

outer walls alone, nearly a million of money. It consisted of four storeys: the first Doric, the second Ionic, the third and fourth Corinthian. The circumference was two thousand feet, the length of the ellipse six hundred and twenty feet, the width five hundred and twenty-five feet, the height one hundred and sixty feet.

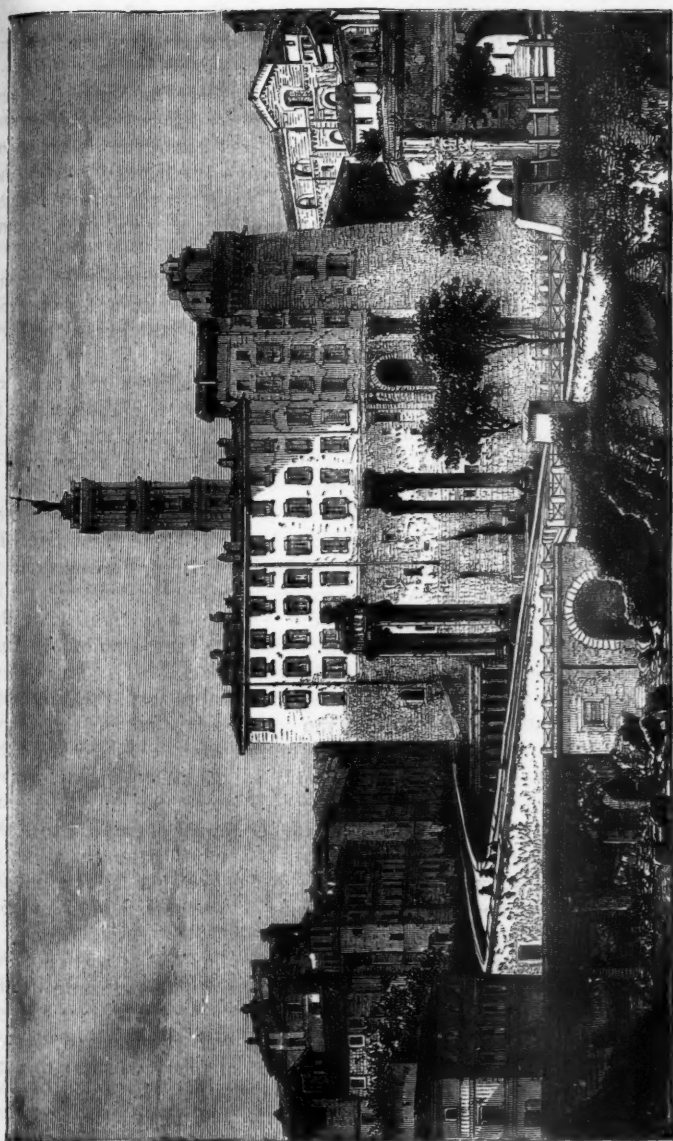
At the dedication of the building 5,000 wild beasts were killed in the arena. The gladiatorial combats gradually became so savage, unrestrained, and frequent, that at length their numbers had to be limited. Even women are said to have taken part in them. By a law passed, not more than sixty couples of gladiators were allowed to fight at one time. The length of the arena was two hundred and seventy-eight feet, the width one hundred and seventy-seven. The superficial area of the building was six acres. It was therefore of unrivalled magnitude; and one gazes upon it to-day with strange emotions of awe and wonder.

The last recorded exhibition is that of a bull fight given by the Roman nobles in 1332: but the gladiatorial combats were put an end to at the beginning of the fifth century.

In later centuries—so great the contrast—the building became famous for its flora, and as many as two hundred and fifty different specimens are said to have existed within its walls. This has all disappeared. Since the Papal downfall the ruin of the Coliseum has been very much neglected. All its floral specimens have been uprooted by ruthless hands, and the building in the process is said to have received more injury than centuries of time had previously caused. So passes away all man's highest achievements and grandest monuments and records under the relentless finger of Time.

Just beyond the Coliseum lies the Forum, and it is here, perhaps, more than anywhere else, that you stand face to face with Ancient Rome. For the Forum in Rome corresponded to the Acropolis in Athens, and was the centre of all that was interesting and important. It was surrounded by all Rome's stately buildings and temples. The seven hills overshadowed it. Here imperial power and splendour found its home and its recognition.

As you pass through the Arch of Titus and tread the *Via Sacra*, you are surrounded by ruins on the right hand and on the left of what once was great and glorious. The whole scene breathes an atmosphere of antiquity and refinement. Pillars stand upright, alone or in groups; others broken, like the symbols of a life cut short. Huge blocks of stone, now lying solitary and lost, were once, perchance, the corner stone of a temple dedicated to Venus or Roma; or the key-stone of some exquisite arch of which all record has disappeared. Fragments of steps are multiplied that once led to some Ionic or Corinthian portico, or up which Romans may have ascended and descended in their worship of some heathen deity. Most conspicuous are the ruins of the Temple of Vesta and of the house inhabited by the six Vestal Virgins, whose office was to watch the



THE FORUM.

sacred fire in the Temple by night and day, and to guard the sacred relics saved by Æneas from the burning of Troy.

These Vestal Virgins were taken from patrician families between the ages of six and ten. At the age of thirty they were allowed to withdraw from their ministry and marry, but there is no record of any one of them having done so. The penalty for letting the fire go out was to be scourged with stripes, and it was considered a token of coming evil to the city. For broken vows the penalty was to be buried alive. The dress of the Virgins was a straight robe of white wool fastened at the waist by a silken cord; and a veil was thrown over the head at sacrificial times.

The temples in the Forum are numberless, but the ruin of the Temple of Vesta is, perhaps, one of the most perfect and beautiful. It was built by Numa Pompilius in the year 79, and is said to have been typical of the domestic hearth of the city.

Coming to Rome on this occasion we had determined that we would visit neither picture nor sculpture galleries. Their name is legion and their demand upon time and energy almost inexhaustible. We knew the galleries of Rome well, and in a stay of a few days it was wisest to avoid them altogether.

But an exception we made in favour of the Palace of the Vatican, and once more we ascended the effective Scala Regia, and stood in admiration before the beauties of the Sixtine Chapel, with its wonderful frescoes and Michael Angelo's matchless roof, representing a series of scenes from the Creation to the Deluge, and figures of the Prophets and the Sibyls. Once more we saw the fresco of the Last Judgment, with its multitude of figures, its wonderful composition, yet heaviness of character. We see the Saviour with the Virgin on His right, exhibiting the print of the nails in His hands, the wound in His side. Near Him are saints and martyrs, St. Peter with the keys conspicuous. A group of angels are sounding the last trump, and supporting the Books of Judgment. You see the fall of the lost; the triumph of the blessed. Charon is rowing a group across the Styx. The fresco has been touched by other hands at different times, and most of its original tone and colour has faded; but for boldness of composition and grandeur of conception it is almost unrivalled.

On the paintings of the Vatican, volumes have been written. We looked again at a few of our especial favourites, and at some of the magnificent and often matchless sculpture. And who that has examined these galleries has not been struck with the faces of the two Popes, placed side by side, and noted the singular contrast: the one elevated, refined, intellectual; the other all that is the contrary to this.

In this wonderful old palace—the most wonderful in the world—the Pope passes his days, under the shadow of St. Peter's, which he so rarely enters. Here he is a comparative prisoner, but in



PAST AND PRESENT.

what a prison does he spend his life! The extent of its buildings and grounds seems incredible. They alone form a small town and territory, and the Pope can enjoy delightful drives within the seclusion of his own garden walls. What treasures are within his keeping! Prisoner though he may be, temporal power that he may have lost, what influence still goes forth to the world from that nook in Rome. The shadows of the seven hills surround it; there is little to be seen from it but the blue skies of heaven; but the influence of one man within its precincts is still sufficient to break or to bind laws, to control monarchs and influence rebellions.

You enter by the famous bronze gate, surmounted by the two angels and a rich mosaic. Passing through a long corridor you ascend the royal staircase, and are fairly within the building which has so long controlled the destinies of the Roman Catholic world.

It has taken more than five centuries to complete the Vatican. It is said that a palace stood here as early as the days of Constantine, attached to his Basilica. In the twelfth century it was rebuilt by Innocent III., but the Palace of the Lateran had been the residence of the Popes for nearly one thousand years; and it was only after their return from Avignon in 1377 that they removed to the Vatican. The Pope was Gregory XI., and he, whatever he might have believed about his spiritual infallibility, felt that, like all men, he was mortal. The Vatican was nearer to the Castle of St. Angelo, and, in any sudden emergency, he would have a closer refuge to fly to.

From that time the building has been added to by different popes, with more or less ambitious designs. Nicholas V. determined to make it the richest and most beautiful palace in the world, but died before accomplishing his object. His private chapel, in which are the beautiful frescoes of Fra Angelico, is said to be the only portion of the present Vatican that existed before his time. In the fifteenth century, Sixtus IV. added the exquisite Sixtine Chapel, containing Michael Angelo's most perfect work. The fresco of the Last Judgment alone cost him seven years' labour. Wonderful as a study it undoubtedly is; as a masterpiece in depicting expression; the horrors and remorse of the condemned, the beatified condition of the redeemed: but it has perhaps been well said that it is more sublime than beautiful. Yet it is only a shadow and faint reflection of what it once was. Like the fresco of the Last Supper in Milan by Leonardo da Vinci, it is faded and almost lost.

Julius II. united the Vatican with the Villa Belvedere, and laid the foundation of the Vatican Museum. The part now inhabited by the Popes was begun by Sixtus V. and completed by Clement VIII. And so it went on, until now the palace, including halls, galleries, etc., contains nearly 4,500 rooms, eight grand staircases, 200 smaller ones, is nearly 1,200 feet long, and 800 feet broad. That the palace still possesses so many of its treasures is due to the English. Napoleon plundered the Vatican and removed his spoils

to the Louvre, but the English Government compelled their restitution and defrayed a large portion of the expense, which Pius VII. was not able to afford.

That night when the sun had long set, and the mists had cleared and the dangerous hour was past, we went out and viewed it all by moonlight. The Forum looked like a city of ruins, a city of the dead. The cold, beautiful light, clear, sparkling and silvery, fell upon all around. Deep reflections were thrown behind arches and pillars, and fell athwart the pavements like shadows cast by the ghosts of ancient Rome. The Sacred Way lay white and distinct in the pale light, broken only here and there by these same shadows. It was all silent, mysterious and ghostly; strangely, weirdly beautiful and impressive. Even Mauleverer admitted its influence, but declared it was more history than moonlight.

Passing through the arch of Titus, and crossing to the Coliseum, the effect was still more startling.

As we stood in the centre of what had once been the arena, peopled with gladiators and wild beasts, we were lost in the grandeur and extent of the scene. Here again the lights and shadows were vivid and distinct. The intense silence of the place was almost appalling. We listened, thinking to hear the weird cry of what Shakespeare has well called "Night's shrieking harbinger;" but this silence of the dead was unbroken. We looked, expecting to see the birds in their noiseless flight outlined between us and the silvery disc; but no wing was spread, no shadow flitted across. The building seemed to have countless great black eyes staring down upon us, and bidding us begone and not intrude upon their solitude, or mock with our presence their departed glory. The uneven ground beneath us seemed yawning to receive us, and plunge us into the caves below, where the skeletons and ghosts of countless wild beasts might well be waiting to greet us with glaring eyes and terrific roar.

It all has been. It is all over. But Rome is full of these ghosts and recollections. Every fresh visit arouses and reawakens them. "When Rome falls, the world will fall," said the venerable Bede. But another world sprang up, and new worlds undreamed of were discovered; and each has his day and passes away; and nothing remains for ever except Truth and Goodness, and the decrees of Wisdom working on to "some far off, divine event."

So our poet is right when he sings:

Our little worlds they have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee;
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

A HAIR-BREADTH ESCAPE.

IN 1870, a month or two before the outbreak of the Franco-German war, one of the most promising cadets, or, as they are commonly styled, "pupils" of the military college of St. Cyr was Gaston de Langeais. He was the last representative of an ancient family in Brittany, whose traditional obstinacy and impatience of control he had inherited to an extent which rendered him more popular with his comrades than with the presiding authorities.

Not that he was especially remarkable for turbulence or insubordination, or that his infractions of rules were more frequent than those of the majority of his fellows. On one point alone he was intractable, and exercised all his ingenuity in repeated attempts to escape a regulation which was inexpressibly repugnant to him. Gifted by nature with an abundance of luxuriantly curling hair, of which he was inordinately vain, the prescribed necessity of having it cropped short was a perpetual grievance to him; and he looked anxiously forward to his second year at St. Cyr, and his consequent emancipation from the too close scrutiny to which he had hitherto been periodically subjected.

"In two months," he said exultingly to one of his intimates, "my time here will be up, and once named officer I shall be free as air, and no longer ashamed to show myself to my cousin Louise. For you see," he added, lifting his cap, and displaying a thick growth of short curls carefully flattened down, "I have still some hair left."

Castles in the air, however, are apt to collapse; and Gaston's visionary projects were, to say the least, premature.

A few mornings later, at the usual hour of parade, the corps of youngsters were unexpectedly summoned to undergo the inspection of the infantry lieutenant, Bouchard: a lynx-eyed martinet, by no means favourably disposed towards pupils destined for cavalry regiments, whom he contemptuously designated as "coxcombs." De Langeais, as the recognised leader of the band, was particularly obnoxious to him; and his keen eyes twinkled maliciously as he stopped short before the young man, and examined him curiously.

"Take off your cap," he said.

Gaston obeyed with an inward shiver of apprehension.

"I thought as much," growled the lieutenant. "If that superfluous hair has not disappeared by this time to-morrow, you will pass the next four days in the 'salle de police.'"

"You are in for it now," whispered his sympathising comrade when the terrible Bouchard had passed on.

"Not a bit of it," replied de Langeais, shrugging his shoulders unconcernedly.

"Why, what on earth can you do?"

"I don't exactly know; but I intend to put off the evil day as long as I possibly can."

Next morning, with the aid of a couple of brushes well soaked in water, he succeeded in levelling the rebellious locks so as to deceive even a practised eye, and appeared on parade with his wonted jaunty air, although not a little nervous as to the result of the coming ordeal. Presently the lieutenant arrived with an ominously slow step, and pausing as before exactly in front of Gaston, repeated the order of the previous day.

"Take off your cap."

For a moment Bouchard seemed puzzled by the apparently smooth surface of the "pupil's" head; but, bent on ascertaining the real state of the case, he unceremoniously lifted a portion of the flattened hair with his forefinger, thereby disclosing a substratum of tiny curls. Then, turning to the adjutant who accompanied him, he briefly consigned the offender for four days to the "*salle de police*," and continued his round of inspection with a self-satisfied grin.

During the last day of his enforced seclusion Gaston practically employed his leisure in decorating his knee, by a judicious mixture of blue and green paint, with a tolerably exact imitation of a bruise, which he showed to the regimental doctor, pretending that the contusion had been caused by his coming in contact with a post in the riding school. Whether he implicitly believed the statement or not, the good-natured medico put him on the sick list, and thus twenty-four hours were gained. His reappearance on parade, however, became at length a matter of necessity; and this time his continued disobedience entailed on him a week's further confinement; at the expiration of which he was again consigned to *durance vile* for an entire fortnight.

"This will never do," thought de Langeais. "The earthenware pot must in the long run be smashed by the iron one, and I shall have to give in at last. I had better try old Grison once more."

Whereupon, having previously, by way of precaution, added a few artistic touches to the pictorial embellishment of his knee, he limped into the consulting room of Dr. Grison, who was fortunately too much engaged with other patients to bestow more than a very cursory glance at the bruise; and, not knowing precisely what to make of the case, gave the new-comer an order of admission to the infirmary, then under the charge of half-a-dozen sisters of charity, presided over by a Lady Superior.

Gaston had hardly exchanged his ordinary attire for the regulation loose grey coat and cotton nightcap when Pitrot, the tonsor of the establishment, was announced, bearing an enormous pair of scissors and a laconic note, which ran as follows:

"The pupil de Langeais' hair is to be cut off immediately.

"BOUCHARD."

The poor coiffeur, unwilling to lose so excellent a customer for pomades and other capillary unguents, and yet compelled to obey the imperative mandate, was in despair.

"Would it not be possible, monsieur," he suggested, "to obtain from the Lady Superior a certificate that the effect of the operation might be injurious to an invalid?"

Gaston could not help smiling at the idea. "I don't quite see," he said, "what a cropped head has to do with a bruise on the knee; but there can be no harm in trying."

As good luck would have it, Sister Angélique, in whose memory perhaps still lingered the fondly cherished recollection of some romantic episode of her youthful days, listened with interest to the handsome Breton, while he related to her his hopes and fears, and his attachment to his cousin Louise. Being naturally kind-hearted and sympathetic, she agreed without much persuasion to his rather incongruous request; so that Père Pitrot, relieved from his disagreeable responsibility, went on his way rejoicing.

A quarter of an hour later, the lieutenant burst into the infirmary in a paroxysm of fury.

"So, youngster," he cried, "it seems you are bent on braving me! Well, we shall see. You cannot stay shamming here for ever; and mark my words—when you do come out, I'll have that head of yours as smooth as a billiard ball!"

With this parting threat he bounced out of the room; and next day everyone of the future cavalry officers—the prisoner alone excepted—underwent the summary operation of "cropping" at the hands of the tonsor, Pitrot.

Meanwhile, Gaston's position was by no means an enviable one. Through the grated windows of the infirmary he could see his comrades mounting their horses in the courtyard, and caracoling gaily as they passed; and on Sundays—most painful trial of all—could hear with a pang of envy the joyous shouts of his more fortunate colleagues, emancipated for a few hours from duty, and on their way to catch the first train to Paris.

The day of deliverance, however, was at hand. Early on the 14th of July—a date never to be forgotten by de Langeais—the occupants of the infirmary were suddenly startled by a tremendous uproar immediately under their windows; and, on looking out, imagined for a moment that Pandemonium had broken loose.

Such a spectacle had assuredly never been witnessed at St. Cyr. The entire quadrangle was thronged by an excited multitude, rushing to and fro in tumultuous disorder, flinging their caps high in the air, and bursting every now and then into a loud and prolonged hurrah! Was it a revolt, marvelled the sisters and their patients, or what could it possibly mean?

A few minutes sufficed to explain the mystery. A hasty step was heard outside the door, immediately followed by the entrance into

the sick room of an adjutant, bearing in his hand an official document, the contents of which, recited by him in a sonorous voice, were greeted with an enthusiasm bordering on frenzy.

"War is declared with Prussia. By Imperial decree, the seniors are henceforth sub-lieutenants."

Before the sisters, deafened by the clamour, had recovered from their stupefaction, they found themselves alone in the infirmary: the invalids, one and all, having mustered strength enough to throw aside their wraps, and make the best of their way downstairs.

Gaston, whose instantaneous cure Sister Angélique afterwards described as little short of miraculous, was the first to rejoin his comrades; and, descrying his persecutor, Bouchard, standing apart from the rest, and apparently in no very good humour, went up to him with outstretched hand and a frank, cheery smile.

"Well, lieutenant," he said, "you won't have me cropped now!"

"So it seems," grimly replied the other, returning somewhat reluctantly the proffered grasp. "You have more luck than you deserve; for, depend upon it, I should have shown you no mercy!"

Each of the seniors entitled to promotion having notified to the adjutant on duty the regiment to which he was desirous of being attached, the preparations for departure were speedily completed. At an early hour in the afternoon the band of exulting youngsters started for Paris, intent on making the most of the three days allowed them before joining their respective corps. Gaston's regiment being stationed at Lille, he had ample leisure, after partaking of a farewell repast at Brebant's with his old companions, to carry into execution a long-cherished project of paying a flying visit to his cousin Louise at Trouville; and, repairing on the third day to headquarters, reported himself to the colonel of the 42nd Dragoons, who received him most cordially.

"You are dispensed from duty," said his chief, "until you have got your kit in order. *Ma foi*, young man, you have arrived in the very nick of time, for before the week is out, we shall be on our way to the front."

On his first appearance at mess, de Langeais discovered to his astonishment that every one of his new comrades, without exception, was closely cropped. "A very necessary precaution," said the president, "in war time; the less incumbrance we carry about us the better. A long beard and as little hair as possible; no comb or razor wanted, nothing but a simple 'brush up'."

"Not to mention," chimed in an old campaigner of proverbial baldness, "that a heavy helmet plays the very deuce with one's hair."

Gaston listened with due respect to these well-meant exhortations, but without the slightest intention of being influenced by them; and, on the arrival of his division at Metz some days later, had already, more than once, declined to avail himself of the services of the regimental barber.

Nevertheless, he instinctively felt that a continued refusal to conform to the general custom must inevitably endanger his popularity, and that the only way to atone for this obnoxious singularity was to distinguish himself by some exploit which might obtain for him an honourable mention in the order of the day.

An opportunity soon came. On the eighteenth of August his regiment, posted near St. Privat, behind an avenue of poplars bordering the road to Saarbrück, had been exposed for several hours to a galling fire of the German artillery; and had suffered severely from an incessant storm of shells, which were beginning to set the trees on fire. The position of the French corps became untenable, and the colonel, deciding that the enemy's guns must at any cost be silenced, ordered a small detachment of dragoons commanded by de Langeais to charge, and cut them off from the main body. The Germans, taken by surprise and imagining they were about to be attacked by the entire regiment, ceased firing and hastily retreated, leaving one of their guns on the field, which Gaston, at the head of fifteen men, bore down upon, and, sabring the gunners, carried it triumphantly into the French lines.

"Bravo!" cried the colonel, warmly grasping the young sub-lieutenant's hand; "you have deserved the Cross for this, and I will take care that you get it."

Stimulated by this first success, and eager to justify, by some further act of daring, the good opinion of his chief, de Langeais neglected no opportunity of proving himself worthy of it. Dispatched on a foraging expedition, and attacked by an outpost of infantry, he completely routed them, and brought ten prisoners into the camp; and a few days later held his ground for half-an-hour, unsupported, save by his own men, against an entire corps of the enemy. His gallantry did not pass unrewarded. Not only was the Cross of the Legion of Honour conferred on him, but his name was three times mentioned for exceptional bravery in the order of the day, and his speedy promotion to the rank of lieutenant was generally regarded as a certainty.

At this juncture, the unexpected capitulation of Metz was a severe blow to him, and, unwilling to accept comparative liberty on parole, he conceived a project which, although extremely hazardous, might possibly enable him to join the army of the Loire. His design being approved of by the general commanding under Bazaine, who entrusted him with a letter to his colleague, Aurelle de Paladines, informing him that the army of Prince Frederick Charles would shortly march towards the Loire, Gaston exchanged his uniform for a blouse and a peasant's straw hat, and carrying a basket of eggs, pursued his way coolly in the direction of the enemy's lines.

"It is a terrible risk," he thought, "but better be shot at once than rot in a German prison."

Challenged by the first sentinel he met, and arrested on suspicion,

he was taken before the colonel of the regiment, who, surrounded by his officers in council, scrutinised the prisoner attentively.

"Where do you come from?" he inquired in tolerable French.

"From Ladonchamps, on my way with these eggs to Grigy," was the young man's reply.

"Are you aware that you run the risk of being treated as a spy?" pursued his interrogator.

"Necessity has no choice," retorted de Langeais with a perfectly indifferent air.

During this brief colloquy, the officers glanced curiously at the stalwart individual before them, whose appearance and manner contrasted so strangely with the homely dress he wore; and were almost unanimously of the colonel's openly-expressed opinion, that he was no peasant, but an officer in disguise, and consequently a spy. A pause boding no good to the accused ensued, and in another moment his fate would have been sealed, when a grey-haired major, who had been intently gazing at de Langeais, suddenly rose from his seat.

"Stay," he exclaimed, "with all submission, I think you are mistaken. This man, whoever he may be, is no officer. All those we have taken prisoners have been close cropped, and no one ever heard of a French soldier on active service with such a head of hair as that."

"True, the major is right," assented several of those present.

"It may be so," said the colonel, only half convinced, "and in that case he is entitled to the benefit of the doubt. Give him a pass, and let him go and be hanged somewhere else."

"A narrow escape," muttered Gaston to himself as he left the camp. "I wonder what Bouchard would say if he knew of it."

A week later, our hero reached his destination, and delivered his credentials to the general in command, by whom the grade of lieutenant was immediately conferred on him. At the conclusion of the campaign he was promoted to a captaincy, and in 1871, after the final rout of the Commune, married his cousin Louise. In the following year, while on leave in Paris, he came across his old enemy, Bouchard, on the Boulevard des Italiens.

"How goes it with you?" asked the latter, as they were sipping their absinthe together.

"Admirably," replied Gaston. "Here am I, a captain at twenty-two, chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and the husband of a charming wife; and all this—no thanks to you, by the way, Bouchard—because *I saved my hair*."

CHARLES HERVEY.

THE DUCHESS'S DILEMMA.

THE Duke and Duchess of Skye were great potentates in their own land—looked upon almost as royal personages by the smaller people who surrounded them. The Duke's property was of great extent and value, and the Duchess had also inherited a large fortune from her brother. Thus they were enabled to keep up a very large establishment and live in a very stately fashion.

The Duke was extremely handsome and dignified, and, truth to tell, exceeding dull. He had very few opinions of his own, but was always ready to adopt those of his really clever wife; and she, wisely, did her best to prevent his appearing the nonentity he was, by constantly quoting him as an authority: "The Duke says——" or, "The Duke is of the opinion——" or, "The Duke wishes——" being phrases that frequently fell from her lips.

The Duchess, besides being a clever was a wonderfully handsome woman, nearly as tall as her husband, with a queenly presence, and features that though somewhat severely classical, were wonderfully beautiful. She always wore handsome clothes—rich velvets, satins and brocades, priceless lace and magnificent jewels—knowing that they became her right well. She was terribly proud, and never ceased to deplore the state of modern society.

The only child of this couple, the Marquis of Eliot, was, alas, a sad disappointment to his parents. He was small, insignificant-looking, and anything but clever. As a child he had been terribly delicate, and in consequence he had never been able to go to school, but had a tutor and masters at home. The one advantage in this arrangement being, as his mother said: "He would not make undesirable acquaintances: both Eton and Harrow are becoming terribly mixed. The great aim of vulgar, pushing people is to send their sons to one of these schools so as to effect an introduction to boys of a class superior to their own."

Perhaps owing to his never having been to school, and his delicacy having kept him much in the background, Lord Eliot was extremely shy and awkward; he seldom spoke, and made no friends. As he grew up, the Duchess was in despair about him—he showed absolutely no taste for any particular line—he was neither politician, scholar, nor sportsman, and disliked society. In fact, he was merely a deadly dull young man.

As soon as his "coming of age" festivities were over, the Duchess began to look out for a wife for her son. It was important he should marry. The Duke's next brother's eldest son was fast and extravagant, and had married a rapid little lady whose conduct scandalised her

husband's family terribly; and the thought that she should ever be Duchess of Skye was intolerable. So many eligible young ladies, whose birth and breeding were such as to make them suitable and desirable for so high a position, were invited with their parents to visit the Duke and Duchess, in hopes that Lord Eliot would fancy one of them. That any well-brought-up girl should think of refusing so great an alliance never entered the Duchess's head. Alas! one after the other came and went—Lord Eliot made no sign—he avoided the syrens, one and all, and if forced to be in their company, hardly spoke. For two years this had gone on; the Duchess had frequently said: "You *ought* to marry, Eliot;" and he always replied meekly: "Yes, mamma—by and bye;" still no progress did he make to the desired end.

The winter of 188— was very severe. The Marquis caught a chill, and for some weeks his health caused great anxiety. Then the doctors said he must spend the spring in a warmer climate. Nice was chosen, and as his parents were unable to leave home at that time, the Duchess settled that her nephew, Lord George Chatfield, a younger son of her brother, the Marquis of Danecourt, should accompany his cousin.

Lord George was rather a favourite of his aunt's. He was an astute young gentleman, knew how to play upon her weak points, and had early found that as the very liberal allowance he received from his father could easily be spent before the next year's instalment was due, an occasional "tip" from the Duchess, who was most generous to those she liked, was by no means unwelcome. So he had, with a good grace, endured the dullness of Craigholme Castle, Panshere Park, the Wilderness, and various other abodes of the Duke's, and the society of his still duller cousin, many a time and oft; knowing that when his visit drew to a close, a cheque for a really substantial sum would find its way from his aunt's possession into his not unwilling hand.

He really was of a kindly nature, and though himself a good shot and fearless rider, did not openly show that he despised Lord Eliot and considered him a "poor creature" because he could do neither. Consequently his cousin had more liking for George than for any of the other relations, who never concealed their contempt for a "wretched weakling who has no manliness about him," as they were wont to think and say.

A visit to Nice at that time suited Lord George admirably. He knew all expenses would be paid with a liberal hand, and at the moment he was specially hard up: "very much in Short street," as he expressed it. So a temporary absence from home and too importunate duns in a bright and cheery place like Nice, and within reach of Monte Carlo, was not at all a bad prospect. The preparations were soon made, rooms in the best hotel taken, and accompanied by courier, valets and a whole paraphernalia of travelling comforts provided by

the Duchess, the cousins left England and fog for bright skies, clear air, and all the other delights of the sunny South of France.

Lord Eliot wrote home regularly. His letters were like himself, not very interesting. "I feel stronger, and George and I have been several long drives. The weather is charming—so nice to go out without being nipped in two by an east wind. Hope you are both well." This was the sum and substance of all his letters, and his parents, knowing their son, did not expect more.

After two months at Nice, Lord Eliot wrote that, feeling much better, his cousin had persuaded him to dine at the table d'hôte. "George thinks it will be more cheerful than in our private apartment," he explained. Altogether the Nice trip seemed to be a success.

The Duke and Duchess were spending the spring months at Panshore Park. The post arrived at breakfast time, and one morning, early in April, the Duchess found a pile of letters beside her plate.

"One from Eliot," she said, taking it up and opening it; and, as usual, began to read it aloud.

"MY DEAR MAMMA,—You have always urged me to marry, so I am sure you will be glad to hear of my engagement. I trust you will like Maud—she is very pretty, and says her waist is only seventeen inches.

"Your affectionate son,

"ELIOT."

"Engaged!" exclaimed both parents. "*Who* can it be—why does he not write more fully? Maud? It must be one of the Fullarton girls. I know they are at Nice, and they are the only people he has mentioned in his letters." And the Duchess hurriedly went to the library and returned with a large Peerage, which she opened and turned to the entry, "Glanmere, Duke of," and hastily glanced down the long list of children. "Yes, it must be," and she read out, "'Lady Maud Geraldine Flora, the third daughter.' I knew Alice Glanmere brought out a girl this year, and she was thought very pretty; they are all charmingly well-bred and accomplished; nothing could be better. We must write to the dear boy at once."

"No doubt, my love, you are right. So clever of you to guess it, for really Eliot's letter is very vague."

"Ah! here's a letter from Jane Cromlie, from Nice—perhaps this will tell us something—she knows the Glanmeres so well." And the Duchess hastily opened another letter in a thin foreign envelope, and read aloud:

"DEAREST KATHARINE,—I do not wish to be officious and disagreeable, but I do think it right you should know that Eliot is making himself very conspicuous here with a family called Jobson. ("Good gracious!" interpolated the Duchess, "what a dreadful name. Dear Maud will soon stop that.") They are staying at his hotel, which is

doubtless how he met them, and for the last fortnight, wherever they go, Eliot is in attendance. They are as vulgar as their name. The mother quite *too* impossible; the daughters pretty in a flashy, underbred style, and ridiculously over-dressed—noisy, fast, and altogether terrible. Alice Glanmere, who stayed at the same hotel, was horrified to see Eliot in such company. She and her charming girls have now gone to Florence. She tried to persuade your son to go with them, but he was so infatuated with Miss Maud Jobson——”

The Duchess's voice, as she read, had become more and more agitated. When she came to the name, she positively screamed.

“Miss Maud Jobson! Oh! Frederick! this is too terrible! How can we stop this horrible thing? *Miss Maud Jobson*—how can Eliot be such a fool—to think we should allow it?”

“But, my dear, I thought you told me Eliot was engaged to Lady Maud Fullarton?” The Duke having got one idea in his head, had not yet grasped the second.

“So I thought—so I hoped!—but this letter throws a new light,” and the frantic lady sank into a chair, with her son's letter in one hand and Lady Jane Cromlie's in the other.

“We must go to Nice, at once—telegraph—do *something*. Oh! what *shall* we do!”

“Is there no letter from George?” asked the Duke.

“I never looked. Yes, here is one.” And the Duchess hastily opened and read the following:

“MY DEAR AUNT,—Eliot tells me he has written to inform you of his engagement. I really do not know what to say about it—I was as much surprised as you no doubt are. Fact is, I felt a little low myself, and went away for a few days' change. (N.B.—He did not think it necessary to explain that the “lowness” was chiefly in a financial point of view, and that he had gone to Monte Carlo and enjoyed a very successful week there.) And when I returned Eliot informed me that he was engaged to Miss Maud Jobson. I was not aware he even knew these people, who, though staying at the hotel, we had never spoken to before I left. I begged him to write and consult you and my uncle before anything was settled, but he answered that although he should, of course, write to you, everything *was* settled. I do trust you will not think I am to blame in the matter.

“Believe me, your affectionate nephew,

“GEORGE CHATFIELD.”

“It must be stopped! Let us telegraph to Eliot to come home at once. It *cannot* be allowed. *Jobson!* ‘She says her waist is only seventeen inches.’” The Duchess groaned as she read the words.

Telegrams were at once despatched to Lord Eliot and his cousin, urging immediate return; and the Duke and Duchess left Panshere

to meet their son in London, having telegraphed their intention to him.

The days before the travellers could arrive were terribly long to the anxious parents, but at length a telegram came from Dover.

"Shall be in town by lunch time.

"GEORGE CHATFIELD."

"Why does not Eliot telegraph himself?" they wondered; but when at one o'clock Lord George alone entered the room where his uncle and aunt sat anxiously expectant, they both exclaimed breathlessly:

"Oh! George, where is he? Has he not come home?"

"Yes—he has come home; but so have the Jobsons, and they have persuaded him to go with them straight to Brighton, where they live."

"To Brighton!—we must follow at once. Oh, George, how could you allow him to suppose for one moment that we should consent to this! How did he meet these people?"

"Well, it appears Miss Maud Jobson has a much cherished poodle, and one day at Nice the animal was nearly run over by a passing fiacre. Eliot happened to be standing near, and seized the creature from under the advancing wheels, just in time to save its life. Mrs. and Miss Jobson, full of effusive gratitude, and no doubt knowing who the rescuer was, made no end of fuss over the 'courage,' 'promptitude,' etc. etc., that had saved their pet, and having thus made the acquaintance, continued to follow it up by every means in their power. 'Darling Boo-boo's brave rescuer' must accompany them for drives, walks, to the play, etc. etc. They had their places put next him at the table d'hôte—and Eliot, never having been regarded as a hero before—" and Lord George smiled deprecatingly at his aunt, who made a gesture of disgust and impatience—"took kindly to the homage. In fact, when I returned to Nice, he informed me of his engagement. Of course I wrote to you at once, and believe Eliot did so also."

There was nothing for it but pursuit to Brighton. And there that evening the Duke and Duchess had a long, and on one side, stormy interview with their son and heir. They argued, entreated and even threatened—it was no use—Lord Eliot, like most weak people, was terribly obstinate. He had made up his mind to marry Miss Jobson, and opposition only made him more determined.

"We must now try the other side," moaned the Duchess, as her son left the room. "Surely they can be bought off."

Next day, the Duchess of Skye drove up to the door of 250, Marine Parade. "Such a good house," she sighed. "No lack of money, I fear, which will make it so much more difficult to buy them off." Mrs. Jobson was at home, and the house inside bore many evidences of wealth. It was gaudy, ostentatious, vulgar—

much gilding, huge mirrors ; brightly-coloured, new. The Duchess groaned in spirit as she recognised the difficulties before her.

The drawing-room was vacant when the Duchess was ushered in, and she had time to glance round. Furniture covered in blue satin, gilt legs and backs, masses of draperies in most inappropriate places, tables covered with photograph frames—no books, no work, no flowers—everything tasteless and showy. After a few minutes' waiting, the door opened, and the owner of all this appeared, and well-matched her surroundings. A large, stout woman, very much made up, with masses of false yellow hair, dressed in the most ultra-fashionable style—a bright green silk dress, elaborately made, and trimmed heavily with gold embroidery, innumerable diamond brooches, bangles, rings—one glittering mass.

"My dear Duchess, how kind of you to come so soon ; Maud will be in directly." And, smiling effusively, Mrs. Jobson advanced with outstretched hand. But her heart somewhat failed as the Duchess, ignoring the hand, merely bowed stiffly.

"Madam," she began, "I have called to see you on what, I fear, will be an unpleasant business for us both."

"Unpleasant," gasped Mrs. Jobson, paling beneath her rouge. "Has anything happened to the Marquis ?"

"Not that I am aware of. But I have come to tell you this foolish entanglement can no longer go on. The Duke absolutely refuses his consent——"

"The Marquis is of age ; he has promised to marry my daughter ; he is not going to get out of it now," interrupted Mrs. Jobson.

"Lord Eliot is entirely dependent on the Duke ; he has absolutely nothing to marry on."

"But he *will* be Duke of Skye some day, and Maud will be Duchess." And Mrs. Jobson faced her antagonist triumphantly. "And here she is"—as the door opened, and a tall, showy-looking girl, a younger edition of her mother, entered the room.

"I should prefer that this interview be between you and me alone," said the Duchess coldly, completely ignoring her daughter-in-law elect.

"Oh ! ma—if I'm not wanted, I'd better go," and Miss Maud, tossing her head disdainfully, flounced out of the room.

"I am empowered by the Duke to—to——" the Duchess faltered, as she glanced at the prosperous, over-dressed woman before her, and her task seemed at each moment more and more difficult—"to—to—offer—any—compensation——"

Mrs. Jobson's face grew crimson beneath the paint and pearl powder—she fairly screamed with rage.

"Do you come here to *insult* us ? to offer to bribe us to give up our daughter's future prospects for *money* ?"

The poor Duchess was sorely embarrassed ; she knew not what to say or do ; how persuade these people to see reason. "Do pray

consider before you encourage your daughter to take a step which could only lead to misery. Lord Eliot's family would never receive her; they would have nothing to live on; in short, it would be a wretched business——"

"You can't prevent her being Marchioness of Eliot now, and Duchess of Skye hereafter! Mr. Jobson will not allow his daughter to starve, whatever you may do by your son!"

The Duchess felt flight was her only resource.

"It is useless our prolonging this interview," she said; "I will wish you good-morning." And, with a stately bow, she left the room, feeling that nothing had been gained by her most unpleasant mission. In deep dejection she returned to the hotel to give an account of her discomfiture to the Duke.

"Well, ma, is the old cat gone?" And Miss Maud Jobson thrust her head in at the door of the drawing-room, where her mother was walking up and down in a state of boiling indignation.

"To insult us by offering money! How dare she! You *shall* marry him!"

"No, ma; I've come to tell you that I shan't."

"Maud——" Mrs. Jobson sank into a chair, almost speechless.

"I never liked him. He's a namby-pamby nincompoop, and what's the good of being a marchioness with no money, and a family that won't recognise me? No, I'm not going to marry him, and there's an end of it!"

"Maud, you've been listening at the door."

"Of course I have. It was my business you were discussing. I'd a perfect right to listen."

Mrs. Jobson stormed and raged and fumed. To think that her daughter, for whom she had schemed so successfully, should turn traitor, and behave so scandalously.

"Do you think you'll pick up a greater catch, may I ask? Dukes are not as plentiful as blackberries. What will your father say?"

"I've told pa, and he says, 'All right.' He doesn't want me to marry a man I loathe and despise."

"You were quite willing to marry him at Nice."

"Well, it did seem rather fine; but I have thought better of it——"

"You've been meeting that wretched Alfred Robinson again," screamed Mrs. Jobson; "that's what's at the bottom of your disgraceful conduct."

"There's no disgrace about it, ma. Yes, I've seen Alf this morning, and we've settled it all, and pa's willing——"

"A horrid, low fellow; a miserable pill-mixer; this to replace the Marquis of Eliot——"

"Alf's a doctor, and he's worth two of the Marquis; and you'd better write and tell the Duchess that I've given up her son. Perhaps she'll send me a wedding present!" And with this parting shot Maud left the room.

Poor Mrs. Jobson ! To think that all her grand visions of future glory as the mother of the Marchioness of Eliot and prospective Duchess of Skye should so suddenly collapse. Maud's engagement had been beyond her wildest dreams—a Marquis ! and to think of that "obstinate, wretched, low-minded girl" (for thus Mrs. Jobson thought of her daughter now) throwing away such a chance, to marry Alfred Robinson, a young and struggling doctor.

"Wishing me, too, to write and tell the Duchess, after all her insolence to me ! No, I won't. Let her find it out for herself——"

Mrs. Jobson's younger daughters, Louisa and Blanche, quite sympathised with their mother. Had the Marquis happened to fancy one of them, how differently they would have behaved.

"It is too odious of Maud," they cried. "She might think of us. We had so looked forward to her taking us about—even presenting us at Court—and now—oh ! it is too selfish—we shall never be presented now."

This plaint of Louisa's suddenly inspired Mrs. Jobson with a bright idea. Ah ! She would get something out of the broken engagement after all.

"Girls," she exclaimed, "we *shall* go to Court, and the Duchess of Skye shall present us !"

"Oh, ma ! impossible !"

"Not at all. If Maud is determined to throw away such a splendid chance, she shall not be allowed to spoil all our prospects. I will write to the Duchess and say that, *on condition she presents us at the next drawing-room, Maud shall break off the engagement to her son.* No need to tell her that the silly girl intends to do so in any case ; and we must make Maud promise to hold her tongue till after the drawing-room ; there is one in a fortnight."

"Oh, ma, what a splendid idea. She must be quiet till after that. Do—do write at once."

Maud Jobson entered *con amore* into her mother's plan. She, too, would like to be presented. No one in their circle of acquaintances had ever penetrated the sacred precincts of Buckingham Palace. How the Joneses and Browns and Smiths would open their eyes.

"I don't mind pretending to be engaged to Eliot for so short a time, if I don't have to be bored with him too much," she said.

When the Duchess received Mrs. Jobson's letter her wrath and amazement were excessive. "That *I* should be asked to present that woman and her daughters ! such impertinence ! such presumption ! Good heavens, what next !"

"Well, my dear aunt," said Lord George, who was with her at the moment : "it seems to me a lesser evil than that Eliot should marry into such a family. Very unpleasant, I allow—but still——"

"What is Mr. Jobson, George—one never hears of *him* ?"

"Something in the city, I believe—and heaps of money."

"I have always so strongly disapproved of the influx of dreadful

people who have been received at Court within the last few years: people that have no claim, no right to force themselves into a place that *should* be select, but that, alas, is so no longer. How could I explain such a presentation to all those who have known how strongly I feel on the subject? No, no; I cannot submit to such degrading terms!"

"Don't write a refusal at once. I quite agree with all you say. It *is* impertinent—odious—but the alternative seems worse," said Lord George.

At the end of two days, the Duchess received a second note from Mrs. Jobson, which ran as follows:

"DEAR DUCHESS,—Not having as yet had any answer to my letter of the 10th, I write again, as time presses. The drawing-room is on the 22nd, and I must ask for an answer at once. Mr. Jobson does not like long engagements, and the Marquis is anxious that the wedding should take place next month, so there is no time to lose. *I must at once order Maud's trousseau or our trains*, and leave it to your grace to say which.

"Truly yours,

"ARABELLA JOBSON."

The poor Duchess! she was indeed driven into a corner. She had always been so staunch an upholder of the aristocratic principles of her youth! And now that she should have to decide between the marriage of her son to Miss Maud Jobson, *or* the presentation by herself of this vulgar and obscure family! It was indeed a cruel dilemma.

Finally, Lord George was made the means of the negotiations. He called on Mrs. Jobson and informed her that the Duchess would consent to present her (and she could then present her daughters) on condition that Mrs. and Miss Jobson would give a written promise to release Lord Eliot from his engagement as soon as the drawing-room was over.

No sooner had Lord George left the house, than Mrs. and the Misses Jobson flew to their dressmaker, Mme. Frivole, where they spent many hours choosing the most magnificent dresses in which to appear before their Queen. The young ladies were to have white satin and pearls, and Mrs. Jobson selected for herself a brilliant green velvet train, to be trimmed with gold, and petticoat of rose-pink satin covered with many coloured beads. Then shoes, gloves, fans, etc., had to be bought, bouquets ordered, an appointment made with a photographer to photograph the ladies in all their bravery: "in your largest size," said Mrs. Jobson importantly. The hairdresser had to be written to and engaged, also rooms taken at the Grosvenor Hotel. In fact, the arrangements kept the whole family in a state of pleasurable excitement for days.

Meantime the Duchess was in a most unhappy frame of mind; the worry and annoyance made her positively ill. She and the Duke

had now taken up their abode in London for the season, and she, too, had ordered her dress for the drawing-room. "Anything will do," she told her dressmaker, who stared in astonishment. Her grace was in the habit of taking much interest in her dress, and liked to exercise her individual taste considerably, but the whole business was such a humiliation to her this time that she could not bear to think of it. "Happily I have the entrée," she said to herself, "so shall merely walk through, and may never see those dreadful people at all."

Some few days before the drawing-room, Mrs. Jobson, who had, by diligent study of the *Court Circular*, acquired some insight into the necessary etiquette, wrote a note to the Duchess, to say that the names for the presentation cards were—"Mrs. James Jobson, Miss Jobson, Miss Louisa Jobson, Miss Blanche Jobson." This as a reminder.

The Duchess, indeed, required no reminder; the miserable subject engrossed her thoughts. She saw little of her son; he remained at Brighton, and she could not bear the society of even her closest friends. The morning Mrs. Jobson's note arrived, the Duchess wrote the customary intimation to the Lord Chamberlain that she meant to attend the drawing-room "and present Mrs. James Jobson." Having done this, she left the note on her table, meaning to send it in the afternoon, and ordered her carriage to drive to the park. Not very far from Skye House the carriage came to a sudden stop. The Duchess looked out to see the cause, and discovered a little crowd gathered in front of the church in that street. At that moment a lady in full bridal costume descended from a hired carriage and entered the church; as the Duchess caught sight of her she started and stared in astonishment. "Surely it is—no—it is impossible. Is it Miss Maud Jobson? Can it be she? Surely Eliot is not going to steal a march on us in this way. No bridesmaids, no wedding party. Oh! I must see," and hastily calling to her footman to open the carriage door, the Duchess alighted and entered the church. Yes! there was a wedding going on, but the tall, broad-shouldered young bridegroom bore no resemblance to her son, and the bride, could it be—

The Duchess listened eagerly for the names. "Alfred Robinson" and "Maud Jobson." Was it possible? might it not be some cousin with the same name? She would make sure.

As the newly-wedded pair were leaving the church, the Duchess stepped up to the astonished bride, who started and blushed. Yes! it must be the same Maud Jobson. Oh, what a relief!

"I can't understand," she exclaimed, feeling she must have some explanation.

"Oh! I am so sorry," cried the bride, almost in tears. "Ma will be so vexed."

"Come home with me at once," cried the Duchess, too much excited to weigh her words, and only feeling she must get to the bottom of the story. And before the bride or bridegroom could

speaking, they were handed into the Duchess's brougham and whirled away to Skye House. "Home" being the order given to the astonished servants.

"Now explain," and the Duchess waved her hand to Maud and her husband to be seated.

"I never wanted to marry Lord Eliot," faltered the bride; "but ma thought it would be a grand marriage, and so we were engaged. But Alf and I always cared for each other, and when we returned from Nice, and I heard how the Marquis's family hated the thought of his marrying me, I told ma I would not marry him. But we all wanted to be presented, so ma said I must not break off my engagement till after the drawing-room. And then Alf got the promise of a good practice in India, but he must sail to-morrow, so—so we just ran away and were married. I made Frivole make a high body to my Court dress, and we were going back this afternoon to tell pa and ma. They'd have kept it quiet till after the 22nd; and we go off to-morrow. But now—oh! dear, what will ma say?"

The Duchess was so overjoyed at the new turn of affairs that she at once became both cordial and kind to the newly-married pair—whom she had taken such summary possession of. She gave them lunch, and then sent her carriage with them to the hotel they were staying at; and then, having first torn up the note to the Lord Chamberlain, herself drove to Messrs. Hancock and purchased a handsome diamond bracelet, which she sent "with best wishes from the Duke and Duchess of Skye, to Mrs. Alfred Robinson."

As to the Jobsons, their consternation was beyond words. A note from the Duchess "declining to present Mrs. and the Misses Jobson" arrived just before Maud (who had been supposed to be spending the day in London, shopping) and her husband appeared.

"Treacherous, under-handed minx," and other compliments were showered on the bride by her affectionate mother and sisters.

"Our trains have just come home ——"

"The bouquets ordered ——"

"The photographer ——"

"What will the Joneses say ——?"

"And the Browns ——?"

"And the Smiths ——?"

"We shall never be presented now," and Mrs. Jobson and her daughters burst into floods of hysterical tears.

The Marquis of Eliot took his jilting very calmly. He declined to discuss the subject with his parents, who became more anxious than ever to see him "safely and suitably married."

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